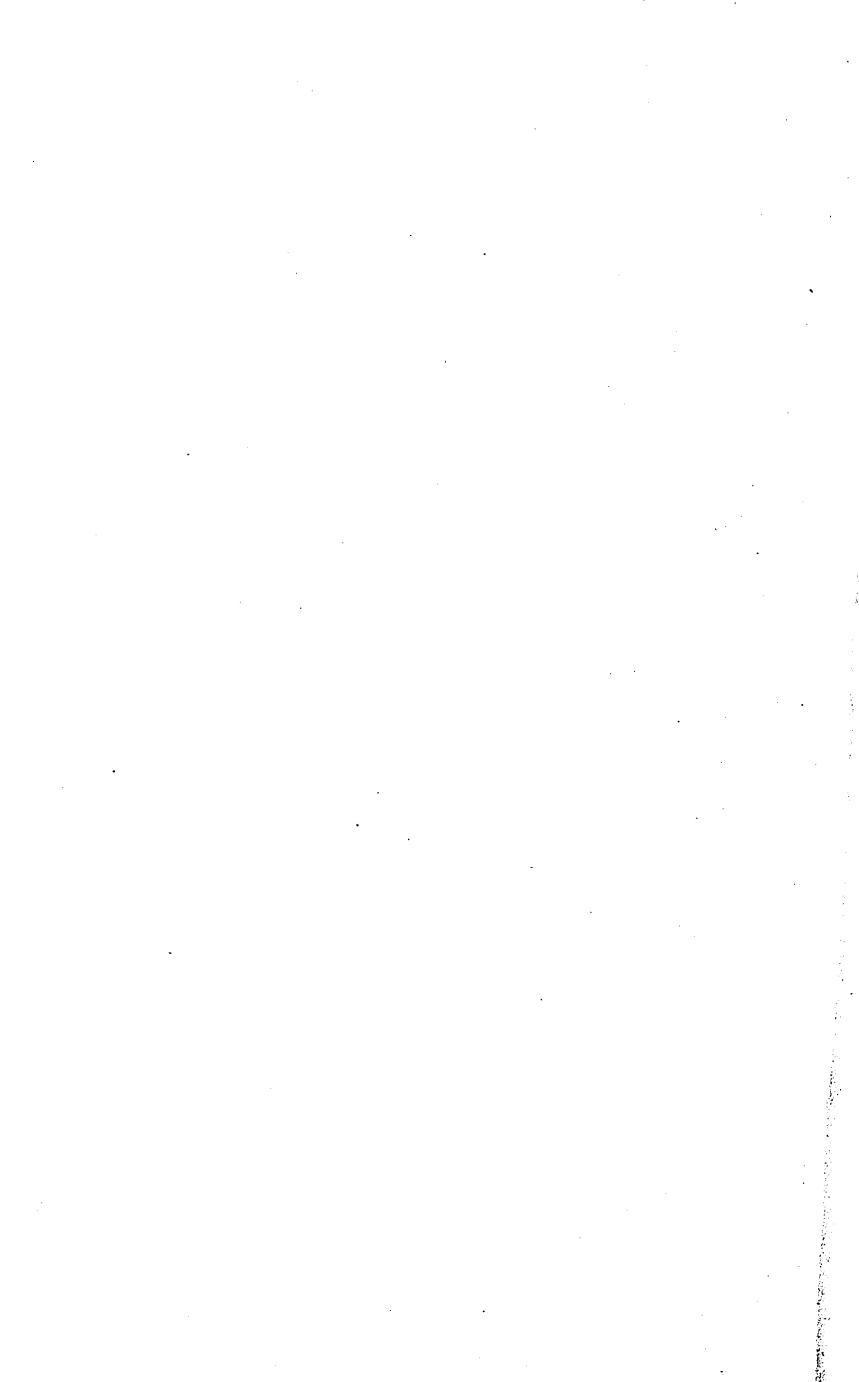


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A STUDY OF JESUS' OWN RELIGION



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TORONTO

A STUDY OF JESUS' OWN RELIGION

BY

GEORGE WALTER FISKE

OBERLIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*Author of "The Recovery of Worship," "Jesus' Ideals
of Living," "Purpose in Teaching Religion," etc.*

New York

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TO

ALICE STEWART FISKE

Amoris Causa

Dignissimae Datum Dedicatum

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR'S VIEWPOINT AND PURPOSE

It is said that more books have been written about Jesus Christ than upon any other subject. Then why add another to the list? Surely in these days of excessive printing-press activity, no one should write another book if he can help it, lest it be relegated to the top shelves already crowded with innocuous but superfluous volumes. The author ventures to issue this book with a deep conviction of its timeliness, and the belief that its subject, though often exploited, has by no means been exhausted.

The book is not a biography, nor a creedal discussion. As the title suggests, it is a study of the religion of Jesus, the religion he himself lived, demonstrated, and taught. It tries to find how the questioning faith of a spiritual genius discovered God, and how genuine religion grew at the Carpenter's bench. The book is a quest for the most characteristic conceptions and social ideals of this outstanding religious genius, this spiritual revolutionist of Galilee. In short, we wish to discover what it is which makes Christianity Christian. We wish to inquire again whether Jesus still has a message for this complacent, cynical, hectic generation of

ours, some of whose sophisticates fancy they have outgrown the Nazarene and his "simple age of credulous faith."

The author admits that he did not undertake this study with the naïve hope of finding, in first-century sources, specific rules for twentieth-century life-situations, and explicit solutions in detail for twentieth-century social problems with their intricate ramifications. Yet he does believe that the experience of Jesus has a great survival value in terms of perennial principles and standards, of Christian spirit and attitude toward life.

This is conceived as a companion volume to the author's recent book, *The Recovery of Worship* (The Macmillan Company, May, 1931), and with a very definite purpose. In fact the publication of the present study, maturing gradually through two decades of teaching the social ideals of Jesus, was postponed to give right of way to the book on worship, that the latter volume might furnish a spiritual background for the present discussion in the minds of the author's readers. Social religion is not the antithesis to spiritual religion! Christ's twofold law of love is fundamentally one. The religion of Jesus was distinctly social and ethical, but it was also spiritual. The Gospel was and is social; but it never was merely "a social gospel." Jesus was not simply a prophet of social righteousness, any more than he was a mere mystic. The universal Fatherhood-Sonship-Saviorhood-Brotherhood form the Christian

quadrilateral. Is there no call for such a sacrificial religion of brotherhood today?

The swift social evolution of the present half-decade, with its astonishing economic and political changes throughout the world, has brought unprecedented challenge and opportunity to religion. Democracy in education, and radio communication, making commerce in social ideals possible on a world scale as never before, have enhanced social change and our liability to both progress and cataclysm. Swift changes have certainly come. The security of social conservatism has been rudely upset. All social foundations have been alarmingly shaken. Sudden reversals of fortune have brought unbelievable upheavals, until the citadels of social privilege are wondering what is impending. Just anything can happen now. After witnessing the astonishing phenomenon of the Russian revolution, the overturn of the most deeply intrenched social tyranny in the world, only to be replaced by the tyranny of the proletariat, our generation has almost lost its capacity for surprise. It is often being said that another general war would destroy civilization. Many observers are also saying that the next social revolution might destroy the present economic system in Western lands, as happened so suddenly in the land of the czars.

There is ample basis for such apprehensions. Even some employers are admitting that the capitalistic system is breaking down. Its periodic cycles of economic woe for millions, between its periods of rela-

tive prosperity, suggest serious maladjustments in the system. After more than two years of business depression and increasing unemployment, it is a time of great anxiety and insecurity in all countries; of much suffering even in unexpected quarters where but yesterday there was comfort. This crisis has brought unprecedented strain upon all institutions for human welfare, including the church. Many and various are the demands for new industrial and political readjustments, and for severe retrenchment in all public expenditures, especially in the extravagant wastes of militarism the world over.

In this great human crisis millions of men in many lands are looking to religion and the leaders of religion for a moral leadership that will arouse fresh courage, patience, and a steadying confidence born of spiritual faith. They are looking to religion for more satisfying interpretations of the meaning of life, for more understanding sympathy and more effective brotherhood. The church that turns a deaf ear to these human appeals, and talks sweetly of otherworldliness, is no church of the Good Samaritan. It is no church for such an age as this. Men are challenging the church of Christ to put modern meanings into its message, more concrete helpfulness into its Gospel. They are demanding clearer proof of the sincerity of our *Te Deums*, our creeds, our worship. They are calling for better demonstration of the kingdom of God's good will, and of the ideals of Christ which make Christianity Christian.

Just a few days ago a well-known teacher in the Law School of Harvard University, Professor Francis B. Sayre, made a notable address to a Boston audience on the present world crisis. Recognized as a Christian gentleman of high ideals as well as a lawyer and publicist of distinction, he spoke with authority and his words carried weight. At the conclusion of his very constructive message, he may have surprised some of his hearers when he summed up his convictions briefly and simply thus: "It all means that we are coming *right back to the principles of Jesus*. It is the task of the churches to declare it and give leadership in the present crisis."

We believe Professor Sayre was thus voicing the challenge of multitudes to the religion of Jesus, and expressing their hope that it has a vital message for this hour of crisis. It reveals also their faith in the spiritual insight of Jesus, his profound knowledge of human nature and its needs, and of God's will and purpose for the making of a better world. Somehow the church of Christ must meet this challenge to its spiritual and moral resources. If it fails to do so, its moral leadership is bankrupt. It becomes a useless anachronism. It must search the mind of the Master. It must explore more deeply his experience of God and of religion. Especially must it illuminate that outstanding message of Christ about the kingdom of Heaven, the Reign of God, and discover if it has any socially redemptive meaning for our day. Was it merely an "*interimsethik*," reflecting the apocalyptic

pessimism of first-century Jewry? Or does it contain a Gospel for today?

The author believes that the will of God for human progress is usually through evolution rather than revolution. He earnestly hopes that our world may be led through its present confusion and crisis by the peaceful means of sympathetic understanding and brotherhood. Yet the social ideals and convictions of the Nazarene were radical, revolutionary, for his own day. And they contain sufficient social dynamite to undermine any anti-social systems that resist brotherhood today. However, his religion fundamentally is friendship and sacrificial service. It has the spiritual might of organized human kindness. Expressed through the divine strategy of the Golden Rule, it has a potential power far greater than the world has ever realized or ever fully tried. In these soul-searching days many are discovering that, after all, it is not wealth but welfare, not goods but goodness, not possessions but well-being, that is the soul of human happiness. Let us go back to Christ and see what religion really meant to him, and what it might mean to us.

An earnest effort has been made to locate the copyrights of all quoted materials, that due credit might be given. In a number of cases, however, this has proved impossible. In case of any inadvertent or unavoidable omission of due credit to either author or publisher, I will gladly recognize such rights in future editions if furnished the desired information.

I wish to acknowledge gratefully the courteous co-operation of various writers and publishers whose authorship and copyrights have been duly credited in footnotes.

The recognition of real literary partnership is due to my daughter Margaret for her accurate copying of the entire manuscript and her intelligent interest in the growth of the book and the reading of the proofs. As I send the manuscript to press many happy memories are recalled, of the many groups of friendly folk in the Church of the Covenant and Fairmount Presbyterian Churches, and the Euclid Avenue Church of Christ, in Cleveland; the Southern Methodist summer school at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; and many other church and Christian Association groups in earlier years, with whom, in lecture courses and discussions, I have worked over these vital problems of the Master's religion; as well as the continuous succession of stimulating graduate classes at Oberlin for a quarter of a century. To all who have thus stimulated my thinking and challenged my own faith I gladly say, This is our book, not mine alone. Our coöperative thinking has made it possible.

G. WALTER FISKE.

The Graduate School of Theology,
Oberlin College, September 1, 1932.

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PART I

GROWING EXPERIENCE

I

HAS CIVILIZATION OUTGROWN JESUS?

THERE is no greater quest than exploring for God. There is no more thrilling adventure than achieving brotherhood. This double crown makes the Galilean Jesus the great Adventurer of history. By realizing a Father-God and his will for human brotherhood the Carpenter achieved a new religion. Then he dared to live dangerously in demonstrating it. It was revolution in religion. Therefore his blind contemporaries crucified him, and history has worshiped him.

It is the irony of the ages that the simple grandeur of the religion Jesus really lived has been obscured by theologians who have tried to illumine the light and clarify the crystal. The result is an intricate faith, a religion about Jesus which has confused the world and rent his church asunder. "One of the greatest hours in Christian history will have struck, when once more *the religion of Jesus* takes the center of the scene." This is the word of one of our keenest seers, the minister of the Riverside Church. We share his confidence that the day will come when Jesus' own religion will be regnant in his

church. And when that hour comes, and not till then, the moral influence of Christianity will lead the world which now distrusts it.

We must have, to be sure, a religion about Jesus, that is, a philosophy about and a loyalty to that peerless personality that the dominant third of the world calls Master. But it has been so easy to intellectualize and emotionalize religion without genuine life committal in conduct, that climactic hour of which Doctor Fosdick spoke has been very late in striking. Hence there has long been too great a divergence between Christianity and Jesus. There is still a wide gap between the popular orthodoxy of the day and the religion of Jesus which grew at the Carpenter's bench.

It has been this unhappy chasm which has made the very name Christianity anathema in some non-Christian lands. There it is a term of baneful memory rather than a title of glory and respect. It suggests primarily politics, not spiritual values and the love of God. In Moslem lands, in several countries of Asia, and in parts of Africa, the so-called Christian nations by their haughty, overreaching diplomacy, their commercial greed, and their warlike imperialism, have made the name of Christianity accursed. Even the loving service of sacrificial missionaries has not removed the curse; though they have made the name of Jesus everywhere loved, and the religion that he lived, admired.

That challenging book by Kirby Page, entitled

Jesus or Christianity, shocks us by its convincing arraignment of political Christianity, as an ecclesiastical system which denies the real religion of the Nazarene. It brings us clearly to the point where we must admit that a person is Christian only to the degree that he is honestly sharing the religion of Jesus, whatever may be his creedal opinions about him. It is only the Christian life which counts, and even the "heathen," perish the word, well know it.

Yet there are contemporaries of ours who do not relish the slogan, Back to Christ, for authority in religion and life. They say, Why go back to the first century for anything? And if you must, why go back to worship, or even consult, a simple, uneducated carpenter? As well consult an auto-tinker in the Adirondacks or a blacksmith in the Apennines about your philosophy of living. The supreme effort of this cynical age of ours is to try to "debunk" Jesus. The new biographers, as they are styled, have been doing their racy best, with cruel scalpel and muddy pen, to take what they call bunk out of biography, especially the traditions of our best-loved heroes. They have lived up to the ideals of the cynic, that there are no ideals, and that nothing is sacred. Claiming to be realists, they break into the private life of England's beloved Victoria, and declare her a stuffy, pious fraud. But very few Britons believe them. They assail the Father of our Country, and leave him stripped of dignity, a profane drunkard, though few Americans accept their

libellous portrait. Nor do these iconoclasts stop short of attacking the Name that is above every name. Franker, bolder, more explicit attacks are now being made upon the adequacy of Jesus as a religious leader than at any previous time in the Christian era.

Was Jesus a Fact or a Myth? There is nothing new or convincing in the myth theory of disposing of Jesus Christ. It is rather significant that this mode of attack now finds few supporters. It passed its climax a century or more ago. We may set it down as indisputable: Jesus was a fact. Attempts to prove that he never lived have collapsed of their own weight, there was so little to support them. When such a wholesale critic and special pleader as H. E. Barnes, former sociologist at Smith College, admits that it is more reasonable to believe Jesus lived than to try to prove the contrary, Christians need not worry about it. Obviously with some reluctance, Barnes dared not risk his reputation as historian by dismissing Jesus as only a myth.¹ The reason is well summarized by Doctor Dickinson: "The attempt to deny the historic Jesus involves such a piling up of hypotheses upon one another, to explain how that conviction came to be, such a multiplicity of inventive explanations, each demanding others without end, that they topple over outside the realm of historic science, and the constructive

¹ H. E. Barnes, *The Twilight of Christianity*, cf. p. 390 ff.

Has Civilization Outgrown Jesus Christ? 7

criticism of the New Testament proceeds unimpeded by them.²

What if contemporary history contains but five references to Jesus, in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, Tacitus' *Annals*, Pliny the Younger's *Epistles* (to the Emperor Trajan), Suetonius' *Lives of the Twelve Cæsars*, and the Jewish *Talmud*?³ The marvel is, not that there were only five, but that so brief and humble a career in such an obscure corner of the Roman Empire as the province of Palestine should receive any notice at all in the meager historical sources of the day. *Jesus lived*. There is no reasonable doubt about it. The real question is, what do we know about him and the religion he lived and taught?

Have We Dependable Sources about Him? With the myth-theory wholly discredited, the favorite attack upon Jesus now is the charge of meager sources. We are told that we do not really know enough facts about Jesus to make a fairly respectable

² Charles H. Dickinson, *The Social Aims of Jesus*, p. 26. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted with their permission.

³ For this very significant recent addition to our contemporary sources referring to Jesus, see Herford's *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London, 1903). Though the Talmud is naturally prejudiced against Jesus, and some of its allusions to him are strangely cryptic, it does give us these objective facts about him. He was called Jesus the Nazarene and his mother's name was Mary. He had devoted disciples, "scoffed at the words of the wise," and worked miracles successfully by means of magic brought out of Egypt. He "led astray and deceived Israel," but was finally put to death on the eve of the Passover at the age of thirty-three.

obituary in the *New York Times*. We are reminded that all we know about him is only the translation of a translation. It is charged that we cannot be sure of a single teaching of Jesus and that he never wrote except upon the sand. We are reminded that the earliest of the extant manuscripts of the New Testament were written at least three centuries after his death, and that in many unimportant details the various Greek manuscripts of the gospels do not agree. Such critics are either ignorant of the meagerness of the sources of other ancient biographies, or are unfair in not acknowledging the fact. How old are our oldest manuscripts of Homer's *Iliad*, Plato's *Republic*, or Cæsar's *Gallic Wars*? How many different manuscripts does the world possess, in all its ancient libraries, containing source material on the life of Julius Cæsar? Marvelously few, and the same is true of all ancient literature and biography. Yet we do have over four thousand Greek manuscripts of the life of Jesus Christ, most of them centuries older than the art of printing, and three of them, the most precious books in the world, going back to the days when the Roman persecutions ceased and Bibles were no longer burned.

Yet how can these three centuries of silence be bridged? During those early days of the church's poverty and peril the sacred writings were preserved, not upon enduring parchment, not upon antelope skins like the beautiful *Codex Sinaiticus*, written at the time of the Emperor Constantine, but upon

perishable papyrus which soon crumbled in the dampness if it survived the persecutor's fires. Such fragile books soon fell to pieces even with the most careful, loving use; but they served to bridge the gaps for us, from decade to decade. The writings of the church fathers have been preserved for us, from the first century down. They were obviously not so precious nor so assiduously copied and circulated. The entire New Testament could be reconstructed from them, if every Bible in the world were lost, so numerous are the quotations.

That the teachings of Jesus were not preserved merely in uncertain oral tradition, dependent upon fickle human memory, is a practical certainty. Not only do we have a very early reference to the *Logia* of Matthew, containing just the words of Christ, but sample papyrus leaves of such a book, perhaps this identical book, have been found in Egypt, long preserved in the dry sands of the Nile valley at Oxyrhynchus. These precious pages contain familiar sayings of Jesus that we find in the Gospels, and a few equally beautiful and suggestive teachings which probably came from him also. The most significant value in these papyrus fragments is the evidence they furnish of the sort of Gospel materials which were in use during those three centuries between the silencing of the Master's voice and the date of our earliest Greek manuscripts of the Gospels. They furnish a bridge for reasonable faith that we have essentially the teachings of Jesus, suffi-

ciently clear and trustworthy for the understanding of his aims, his attitudes and his ideals.

The same may be reasonably claimed for our knowledge of his own mode of living. There is ample evidence for the critical acceptance of the *Ur Marcus*, the original Mark as in early circulation, furnishing a reliable written source of the facts of the Master's life based on the oral testimony of an eye-witness, Simon Peter. It requires no stretch of the imagination to visualize the very early use of the *Logia* and the *Ur Marcus* in private devotions and public Christian worship. Both were, of course, superseded, and therefore soon lost, when our canonical Gospels were written, three of which utilized and replaced them both.

Thus we do not depend upon the weakness of oral tradition, any more than upon the fancies of pious myth-making, for our knowledge of Jesus Christ. Very early documents and generations of painstaking copying upon papyrus, the only available paper of the poor, furnish an adequate bridge from his spoken word to our living manuscripts of parchment. Of course if your "wishful thinking" is of the cynical cast, and you admire the polemics of the destructive critics who demand a bridge of steel and reinforced concrete in the first three centuries, then you will spurn the bridge of papyrus which many Christian scholars believe proved quite good enough for the providence of God. The limitations of this book make extended discussion of critical problems im-

possible, though the writer has long been interested in them. But is it not fair to state that the same rigid destructive criticism, if applied to general literature, would threaten our faith in anything older than the age of printing?

Is Jesus Too Antiquated to Count Today? The most characteristic twentieth-century attack upon the authority of Jesus is the claim that civilization has outgrown him. The ultra critics patronizingly admit he was a good, kindly, well-meaning man, deeply spiritual, and more or less of a religious leader in his day, but not for our day. He is simply out of date, just a friendly antique, too slow and old-fashioned to count, in these days of quantity production, high-pressure salesmanship, and mile-in-twelve-seconds air travel. For instance, the Randalls, in their recent book, *Religion and the Modern World*, allow that Jesus "was beyond question a truly great moral genius and stands out as a supreme ethical teacher, perhaps the greatest in our tradition;" yet after picking their way through the Gospels they dismiss Jesus' teachings as wholly irrelevant to modern life. Much less honest is the writer who decides that Jesus "was no religious genius, but a tragically deluded and deluding dreamer," yet nevertheless goes on to invite us, with startling inconsistency, "to worship the idealized Jesus of tradition. We need him. We are justified, indeed, in singing to him, 'Jesus, lover of my soul.' "

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Harry Elmer Barnes is quite naïve in his inability to understand why such "modernist leaders" as Sherwood Eddy, Harry Ward, Kirby Page, Jerome Davis, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Bishop McConnell, whose social views appeal to him strongly, should hold such "amazing views of Jesus and his relation to modern problems!"⁴ "Any one of them," he asserts, "is incomparably superior to Jesus as a guide both to religious and social reconstruction. Moreover, they have all led much more interesting and instructive lives than did Jesus; and, so far as we know, all of them are much more impressive personalities than Jesus." He gives these six men high praise when he adds, "They are all men whom he greatly admires, and if there are more useful Americans, he is not aware of their identity."

But on the basis of Mr. Barnes' own estimate, if the six most useful Americans have developed such noble characters and such leadership in modern social ethics, chiefly by taking Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master (as every one of them asserts), is not this powerful evidence of Jesus' moral and spiritual influence in the modern world? If so, why decry him? Let us have more of his wonderful influence rather than less. Nor did these six men gain their moral acumen and spiritual power merely by a slavish use of what Barnes calls "the Jesus stereotype," but by a life-long study of his teachings and

⁴ See H. E. Barnes, *opus cit.*, pp. 377-384 *passim*. Published by the Vanguard Press.

ideals and reincarnation of his spirit. Let us have more of Jesus' religion in the twentieth century, and thus produce more Eddys, Wards, and McConnells!

In similar vein the same author praises Doctor Fosdick to depreciate Jesus. After quoting the former's high appreciation of Christ as the supreme champion of personality in all human history, Barnes adds, "The fact is, Doctor Fosdick is infinitely better fitted to handle any phase of the problem of personality than was Jesus." With the same reckless superficiality he remarks of Kirby Page: "He is an infinitely better informed and more trustworthy guide to religious reconstruction than Jesus and all the Old Testament prophets combined." And a few pages later he says the same of Bishop McConnell, though in the same breath deprecating the Bishop's loyal dependence upon Jesus, and adding this astonishing outburst of the modern superiority complex: "Nothing better could happen to American religion than for the progressive young divines in Methodism to forget about Jesus, except insofar as they might recall him after the fashion of Zoroaster or Buddha (=?), and seek their inspiration in the life and doctrines of Bishop McConnell."⁵ Yet, alas, even this would soon bring them back to Christ, for are not "the doctrines of Bishop McConnell" only a modern translation of the teachings of Jesus?

Among the books of other recent writers, less im-

⁵ Barnes, *opus cit.*, p. 384.

pressionistic than Barnes but essentially agreeing with him that Jesus has no future and deserves no present, are *Religion and the Modern World*, by the Randalls, already cited; *The Great Galilean*, by Robert Keable; *The Historical Christ: Myth, Magic, and Morals*, by F. C. Conybeare; *Pagan Christs: Christianity and Mythology*, by J. M. Robertson; and *The Christian Saga*, by Norman T. Boggs, which rings the death-knell of Christianity through two ponderous volumes. Yet it is in Shirley Jackson Case's new book, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, that we find the most sharply defined statement to the effect that civilization has outgrown Jesus: "The problem of adjusting individual conduct to the necessities of social environment in a modern age cannot be solved by imitating *an ancient pattern*." There we have it in a nutshell. Jesus is an ancient pattern. So it is not rational to imitate his conduct in our modern age. Dr. Case then rather condescendingly admits his genuine admiration for Jesus' sincerity, and grants "the full propriety of his speaking and acting as he did within the particular situation where he lived and in the light of his beliefs about the future."⁶ That is, the limitations of Jesus' eschatological views and of his narrow first-century environment preclude his speaking with authority today. Postponing the fuller consideration of the eschatological problem to Chapter IX, let us look

⁶ S. J. Case, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, p. 367. Published by the University of Chicago Press, and quoted by permission.

more sharply into the question, Is the value of Jesus' teaching limited to his own day?

Is There a "Jesus Way of Living?" Doubtless Case and Barnes and Randall are thoroughly reasonable in their protest against the indiscriminate imitation of Jesus in modern living and the unreasoning transfer of his teaching from the ancient to the modern social situation. A slavish imitation of Jesus' personal example would put an end to marriage, set everybody to using carpenters' tools, and then becoming peripatetic teachers, wearing long, loose-fitting robes of the simplest pattern. Obviously this would be plain folly. No sane person speaks of the imitation of Jesus in any such sense. It is the incarnation of his spirit that is involved in Christian loyalty. Equally questionable is the attempt to apply his teachings as specific rules of action imposed upon his followers for all future time. That would be a return to Pharisaism, exactly what he tried to escape. We shall find that Jesus wisely avoided setting up a system of rules for his disciples.

Is there then no justification for the use of the term, "the Jesus way of living," with reference to present-day Christians? Liberal Christians have for many years been using this expression and for millions it is meaningful and precious. It has given ethical and social content to modern faith and practice. It has brought relief from the overemphasis upon dogmas and creeds, because it has obviously taught the su-

preme importance of Jesus' own religion, which he himself lived and taught. One of the noblest modern expressions of what is involved in "Jesus' Way of Life" has been formulated by Dr. Sherwood Eddy and widely circulated and taught by him in many lands. Yet now the radical critic calls upon Mr. Eddy "to abandon his palpably hopeless effort to discover a consistent and relevant social philosophy in the teachings of Jesus and to apply this to conditions quite different from ancient Palestine in the first half century of the Christian era;" and accuses him of lack of historic sense and logical consistency in founding his appeal upon "the uncertain, vague, and contradictory notions of a very obscure religious teacher in a long past stage of civilization." *

Yet the chief stock criticism of the church's enemies is their claim that Christians are not like their Christ. So critics have always claimed. But why? Why must consistent Christians be like Jesus, if there is no definable "Jesus way of living" which can be applied in modern life? If he is only a hazy figure in the mists of the dark ages, and if his teachings (provided they can be clearly determined in the stream of mixed traditions) are irrelevant in our modern complex age, why must we follow him? Yet the world says we must. They demand it of us, else we must surrender his name. Why? Because the world is well aware that back there in the blue haze of Galilean days there was one who lived the life,

* Barnes, *opus cit.*, p. 380.

who demonstrated such a godlike quality of character as to capture the world's imagination in all the centuries since. And the world demands that his followers be like him. Doctor Buttrick expressed it beautifully in his Beecher Lectures at Yale last year:

"There was once a Man who lived the Life. He was peasant-born, and met nobody of 'importance' save John the Baptist. The historians, had they mentioned him, would probably have dubbed him 'a religionist from Galilee.' He was killed by people inwardly blind. But he lived the life. His Cross is now against the skyline of almost every modern city. But what has he, that craftsman from the hills of Galilee, to do with our cities? Oh, he lived the life! 'Many other things Jesus did. . . .' ends the Fourth Gospel. Yes, he is always doing things. He was working in the life of the author of that Fourth Gospel, working in St. Francis, working today in Albert Schweitzer; working in the broadening of our creeds, our protest against civic shame, our sword of the Spirit lifted against the sword of war; and working in you and me just as often as we dare to think of him. All because he lived the life! . . . Suppose *we* should dare to live the life? . . ."

It is a just and reasonable challenge for a critical world to demand of the followers of Jesus to make good. There was a spirit in Christ Jesus which his followers must discover and learn and live again. There were ideals in his heart to which he was unflinchingly loyal, even unto death. These ideals, to a considerable degree, have already won their way

⁸ G. A. Buttrick, *Jesus Came Preaching*, p. 186. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted with their permission.

in the world; but even his nominal followers are not yet fully dominated by them. The world sees this inconsistency and laughs cynically. We must incarnate these ideals or continue to forfeit even their respect, for they know *he lived the life*. In view of this pressure of justifiable criticism what shall we say to the claim that the teachings of Jesus are irrelevant today because our civilization is so far in advance of his?

Has Our Civilization Made Jesus Obsolete?
Common sense compels us to recognize the discrepancy between our civilization and that of Jesus. Our inventive era has piled up history's biggest scrap-heap. We have scrapped that symbol of the simple life, the spinning-wheel, and all its contemporaries. Even the sword is now obsolete. The auto bus has crowded off the highway both the horse car and electric inter-urban. Owners of railway bonds are wondering how soon buses, air-planes and monorails will displace steam railroads. Gangplows and caterpillar tractors have displaced all other successors of the crooked stick. The poor silkworm has been crowded hard by artificial silks; and modern chemists are proud also of their synthetic dyes, drinks, and diamonds. Lumber is giving way to steel and reinforced concrete, and soon we shall pour our houses, not build them. Ancient diseases which have long doomed the race, such as leprosy, yellow fever, tuberculosis, hookworm, bubonic plague, and others with

unspeakable names and reputations, have been either stamped out or brought under control. Yes, there has been marvelous *material and physical progress*. But has our insight into truth and our appreciation of eternal values likewise transcended the age of Jesus? If not, of what avail are our wealth and creature comforts? We have not yet outgrown Jesus Christ. We still have to admit that he lived the life.

But it was his own life he lived, not ours, in that simple Galilean village in the first century. How do we know his method is still valid for our life today? What knew he of modern science and inventive skill? From his little conning tower he could see Mt. Hermon and the Great Sea, the North Star and the Pleiades, but what did he know of a universe of suns and stars some trillions of light-years apart? Did he ever dream a dynamo, a hydro-electric plant, a hundred-passenger Zeppelin, a four-thousand passenger ship, an autosynchronous, superheterodyne radio, a machine-gun producing a thousand murders a minute, or poison gas, or TriNitroToluol? No, thank God. But why should he? Possibly he saw clearly the eternal verities and the great simplicities of spiritual truth partly *because* his mind was not earthbound, chained to the mechanical complexities which have turned so many moderns into lazy spend-thrifts, intellectual automata, and spiritual morons.

It is very enlightening to notice that most of the deflating of Jesus that comes from our radical critics

with their mighty superiority complex for modern civilization is due to the fact that *most of them are mechanists and materialists*. They worship that super-robot, mechanism. They appreciate most the vast wealth and the multiplication of material goods which physical power has produced. All this is extremely significant for our discussion. It suggests that for men who lack spiritual vision and put mechanism above personality, Jesus is *passé*. He would be as much of an anachronism on Wall Street as the camels of the Magi. But does that cast reflections on Jesus or the modern system? Whose sense of true values is warped, his, or the worshipers of wealth and physical power? It all depends on your viewpoint and your standard of values. It is barely possible that Jesus may be right, so fundamentally right that his estimate of moral values, his insight into spiritual truths, may be profoundly relevant to our human living even in such an age as this, when you cut under all our superficialities and overweening pride of wealth and power.

Has Mechanism Yet Changed Human Nature?

Our problem is partly a biological one. What has this age of mechanism done to the human organism? Its nervous overstrain has finally put heart-disease at the top of our death statistics. Its moral overstrain has multiplied our divorces to the world-record point. It has produced a vast need of *things*, a raging appetite for much which neither feeds the body

nor the soul, nor quenches thirst, but creates new thirsts and unnatural hungers, new capacities for both joys and great regrets. But down deep at the heart of us, with all this new complexity, has human nature changed so very greatly after all? The elemental needs, desires, joys, sorrows, appreciations, loves, still rule the race.

How has life really changed? All the externals have been transformed. Many factors which count but little have been greatly altered. But *life itself* is still very much the same. The consensus of biology agrees that the great deep stream of human heredity passes on from generation to generation, with its vast racial heritage, unaffected by the superficial changes of new cultures. In fact the whole treasure-pile of civilization is passed on by social evolution, by social transmission only, never by organic heredity. The human infant is never born cultured, or religious, or criminal, or educated, or skillful, or modern in his tastes and cravings, any more than he is born speaking the English language. Thank God for that! Otherwise he would never have a chance in the world.

Let modern egotism take a reef in its sails. Progress was not born with us. There were giants long before our day. There were clear-thinking philosophers, brave prophets of righteousness, champions of social justice, and spiritual seers whose vision was not clouded by the grimy smoke of factories nor the distorting medium of mechanistic materialism with

its high-powered selfishness. Of course our very mechanical progress has brought its social complications, its gigantic industrial, institutional, and political problems, of which Jesus never dreamed. That should go without saying. No sensible Christian will search the Gospels to find a wage scale for Passaic silk mills or North Carolina cotton mills; not taking too literally the economics of the Parable of the Vineyard. Yet he *will* find a spirit and a purpose, an attitude and an ideal, in the Man of Nazareth, that will surely reward his quest. Perhaps it is exactly this for which the distraught world is very impatiently waiting.

The Limitations of an Age of Externalism. It is rather evident that the moral standards and social ideals of the Nazarene have not yet been bettered or displaced by the wisdom of our mechanistic age. Before we pass to a state of entire complacency about it, let us notice some of its limitations. Let us not worship prematurely the *deus ex machina*. Have the great masters in art or music been yet displaced? Has the robot yet produced a sonata or a symphony? Has the high-speed, multiple, rotary press, which emits a steady torrent of metropolitan dailies and hourlies, ever composed an original epic, or drama, or sonnet, or even a limerick? The robot can be made to manipulate the switches to guide the complicated machinery; but can it set the combination for those switches like a master mind? Are our

modern mechanisms creating finer demonstrations of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, or are these supreme goals and values of life being stifled by them?

If the greatest of American industries today is the multiplication of wants, as Doctor Luccock of Yale asserts, and the measure of personal success is the ability to satisfy these wants we have artificially produced, then this explains why the millionaire stands forth as the supreme symbol of modern success. Yet what millionaire loafer, dwelling in a palace equipped with every mechanical complexity for multiplying physical comfort and the superficial efficiencies of life, and minimizing the difficulties of living and the urge to labor and create, ever became an Edison, a Lincoln, a Ford, a Wilson, a Lindbergh, a Raphael, a Beethoven, or a Jesus?

John Dewey is quite right in his estimate that the chief American trait today is *externalism*, which is but a new name for materialism. Our chief preoccupations are with superficial things and the instrumentalities for attaining them. Yet in gaining them we are in danger of being smothered by them. Luccock in his *Jesus and the American Mind* cites a peculiar accident in a building occupied by a Five and Ten Cent Store. Under the weight of all the cheap rubbish the floor caved in and rained an avalanche of gimcracks upon the people below. There were no fatalities, but the living were almost buried in the stuff! "This accident," he says, "may well stand for what has happened in the lives of multi-

tudes. They have been caught in a *swirl of things* which has come down on them with the result that the inner life has been flattened out. The table of contents in a million minds would be just about exhausted with some such entries as these—apartments, balloon tires, baseball, radios, five-cent cigars, installment buying, vacuum-cleaners, electric refrigerators, tabloids, talkies, overstuffed furniture, sun-porches, and body squeaks. There is no place for the soul, even in the index.”⁹

The Perennial Need of Jesus Christ. Our multitudes are lost in a welter of sheer trivialities. In such a state of social chaos as this, the disturbing fact is that life for them has ceased to have any meaning. It is just a ceaseless round of slavish work and selfish revel, without spiritual motives, aims or hopes. As long as prosperous days furnish the gold for maintaining the whirl of the butterfly life, the game keeps up, even though it is not worth the candle. But when times of depression shut off the material supplies, starved souls fall back helplessly on their own empty resources. Then the real tragedy begins. Questions press for answers. What is life all about? Is it nothing but wheels within wheels endlessly whirling, with no whence or whither?

The popular philosophers of the day, themselves the products of the mechanistic age, have no creative

⁹ H. E. Luccock, *Jesus and the American Mind*, p. 104. Published by the Abingdon Press, and quoted with their permission.

answer. The total hopelessness of their philosophy of life's meaning is well summed up in this paragraph from Bertrand Russell: "Man's origin, his growth, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of the accidental collocations of atoms. No fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave. All the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins."¹⁰ What appalling pessimism! It falls of its own dead weight. Yet this note of utter faithlessness finds response in many minds whose sole resource is a selfish materialism in a godless world.

Whither shall we look for spiritual guidance to lead the youth of such an era back to normal, wholesome thinking again, and back to the life worthwhile? Who shall be the savior of our age from its philosophical pessimism, its hopelessness, its materialistic selfishness, its banal externalism, its worship of mechanism? *It is Jesus or nobody.* Neither Confucius, Mohammed, nor Buddha is proving equal to the challenge. The first is only a moralist. The second is only a fatalist. Both lack any message for the spirit of man. Buddha alone is Jesus' rival. He

¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, in an article in *The Presbyterian Banner* for Nov. 10, 1930, p. 13, and quoted by permission.

speaks the language of the spirit, but his note is the defeatist's sigh of passive resignation. He has absolutely no constructive message for creative living. He offers no inspiration for progress, no word of courage or faith for the conquest of evil or injustice. Yes, it is Jesus or nobody. Has our civilization outgrown him? Never was there greater need of him. Until man outgrows his spiritual hungers and his capacities for religion; until he finds a wiser and better interpreter of life's true meaning; until he discovers a nobler champion of human justice and a more perfect personification of divine love, man will continue the quest of the ages, the pilgrimage to Nazareth.

II

THE BOY OF GALILEE AND HIS QUESTION- ING FAITH

"Erect in youthful grace, and radiant
With spirit forces, all imparadised
In a divine compassion, down the slant
Of these remembering hills, He came, the Christ!"

—*Katherine Lee Bates.*

ALL we know of Jesus' childhood among the Galilean hills is a telegram of fifteen words in Greek, a sentence packed with a whole child-world. That even this fragment survived time's ravages is rather surprising, it is so beautifully natural; for the tradition-mongers were little interested in the normal human aspects of his life. It tells us only that he grew, became strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God. But that bespeaks a normal childhood, the very last thing to interest the celibate priests and monks who preserved for centuries the early traditions.

So we know little of Jesus' childhood, just because it was so natural and happily uneventful. John Oxenham's poetic fancy has given us a beautiful picture, fascinatingly true to life, in his recent book, *The Hidden Years*; and sundry ancient writers, with

less restrained imaginations, long ago offered weird guesses, in various "Gospels of the Infancy," as wide of the mark as guesses could be. Their sole intent was to exploit the child Jesus' supposed miraculous power, quite indiscriminately displayed, thus making him out exactly opposite to the delightfully human boy we see in this compact sentence broadcast from those silent years by the careful historian Luke.

In a very natural kind of way, then, the boy Jesus grew. If we add the clause "in favor with God *and man*" from Luke 2:52, in all four possible ways Jesus grew, in physical equipment, in mental development, in social adaptation, and in spiritual grace. Not unlike the Judean boy, John ben Zacharias, he roved the Galilean hills. With equal naturalness he developed a strong body, and much more normally than John, he grew up with the boy-life of the village. A Hebrew child was no longer called "little" after the age of twelve. Reaching that magic birthday he was presented at the synagogue the next Sabbath, called his "Sabbath of Phylacteries," and wore for the first time these symbols, presented by his father, signifying that he was now a "son of the precepts" or "son of the Law." This was his initiation into man's estate, and came at the average time for the adolescent change, as in that warm climate children mature some three years earlier than in America. It is therefore fair to suggest that Jesus at twelve was at the crisis of his personal development, at the threshold of youth, and was emotionally

susceptible to deep impressions and high spiritual experiences.

Every year his parents at Passover time were doubtless accustomed to take the holy pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the most religious people of the village. Every year, upon their return, they would tell the children about it, who meantime had stayed with the neighbors. There came a winter when the neighbors, talking together at the village well, noticed a new look in the eager face of "the carpenter's boy" as he passed them with springy step. And perchance one said, "What a fine lad is yon eldest son of Joseph! He must be about twelve now and will be going to the Holy City, come Passover time." So in due time his day of high privilege came. He had been growing up as fine and straight and strong as any boy in the village, and must have loved the ring-games in the open square near the spring as much as any of them. One can easily imagine the eagerness of Jesus when that spring morning came when the caravan started. All had been astir in the village for a week past; in fact the carpenter's Boy had been counting the days very likely for a month before. He was to see his first glimpse of the city! And what a city!

On that great morning the fortunate ones said good-by to the rest of the village and the gay caravan wound its way back and forth down the steep face of the mountain and then across the plain, down to the Jordan and southward on their happy way. All

the way Jesus ben Joseph was on tiptoe with anticipation, but toward the end of the journey when the caravan slowly toiled up the rocky, crooked road from Jericho, he could hardly hold back; he wanted to run, for Jerusalem was just over the hill and around the corner! At last he turned the last corner and saw the glorious sight of the Temple towers and the massive walls of the city, and his dream had come true.

No doubt the gayly colored costumes of the crowd and the bazaars and shops with their varied wares attracted him, like any other boy; but he found his fascination in the beautiful Temple, though recently restored by Herod in fresh glory, the religious capitol of his race for many centuries. Often he had heard his friends describe its dignity and beauty. Now he saw it with his own eyes and attended its solemn services. His own ancestor, King David, had planned the first glorious Temple, and another ancestor, Solomon, had built it. The greatest joys, sorrows, and triumphs of his race had centered there. How wonderful the place seemed to him!

After the great Passover feast was over, with its week of rejoicing, the Nazareth caravan started for home. It must have been a large one, for Jesus' parents thought he was with another part of the company and did not discover their mistake until the end of the first day's journey. It shows how they trusted him. They were not accustomed to worry about him. So back they toiled next day up the steep

Jericho road, and anxiously searched for a day in the city before finding their son in one of the rooms of the Temple. He was having the time of his life with a group of learned scribes, so much wiser than his teachers in Nazareth, that he was making the most of his opportunity to ask them questions that he had long had on his mind; questions the *chazzan* of the synagogue at home was unable to answer. The home scribes had often quoted what these great teachers, Hillel, Shammai, Gamaliel, and the rest, taught about the deep problems of the Law. Now Jesus had the chance to find out for himself, and he was making good use of his time. In his eagerness to learn he lost all sense of the passing of time, so the home caravan started for Galilee without him.

There was a noticeable change in the carpenter's Boy when his anxious parents finally found him, still discussing life and religion with the wise rabbis of the Temple. His boyish face revealed a new manliness. It was all aglow with a high, joyous life-purpose. At this crisis of his youth he had been wondering what his Father God wanted him to do with his life, and now he had discovered. There was some sort of career before him, a life service of his brother men. When his parents appeared he seemed as surprised at the gentle rebuke of his mother as they were in finding him in such distinguished company, where he was so apparently welcome and sustaining so well his part of the discussion. "How was it that you had to hunt for me?" he asked. "Didn't you

know I would be here? Wouldn't you know I must be busy with what concerns my Father?" Yet they failed to catch the full significance of his words. Nor can we believe that Jesus did fully either. But we are told he dutifully followed them back to Nazareth and was always their obedient son; also that his good mother carefully treasured in memory all these experiences as he grew into manhood.

Meager as the story is, it has all the distinctness of a cameo. Or rather it is a window, the only window, opening toward a beautiful childhood, and illuminating for us the only incident we know, in the midst of thirty years of silence. How thankful we are for that window! It enables us to know that during those silent years, while Jesus was working at his father's trade, he was happy in the inner assurance that his heavenly Father would have work for him to do, and that some time the day would come when he would be free to engage in his Father's great enterprise, whatever that might prove to be.

Many have advanced the claim that this scene of the youth Jesus in the Temple proves that he had supernatural wisdom and had a superhuman childhood. Rather let us call it real spiritual genius and a spiritual precocity revealing unusual interest in religious matters for a youth on the threshold of early manhood. It seemed a genuine predilection for God and an early sense of calling to his service. How was such a special interest developed so early? Protestants are apt to overlook the fact that the mother of

Jesus was a very unusual person. She must have been, to have been the mother of Jesus. What meager information we have about that simple Galilean home indicates a home of deep piety and unusual devotion. We must believe that Mary and Joseph very early taught Jesus to pray and started thoughts of God in his mind earlier than memory itself. His eager mind was encouraged to search the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue rolls. The fact that his supreme name for God is Father, rather than Jehovah, the holiest name for God known to the Hebrews, is quite significant. It is convincing proof that he had the highest respect and admiration for Joseph the carpenter, and suggests that the latter may have stimulated his spiritual interest and taught him much about God. Joseph's early death, precipitating Jesus' first emotional crisis, must have sanctified still more the title *Father* and deepened his growing faith in a Father in heaven.

III

A SPIRITUAL GENIUS DISCOVERS GOD

HAPPILY the Boy of Galilee could never remember a day when the heavens were as brass above him, because there was no God. In the devout home of Joseph ben Heli, of the line of David, the God of Israel was never forgotten. His gentle mother, teacher of his most impressionable years before the dawn of memory, may very early have taught him the God of the *Magnificat* as she joyously sang:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

And the father-priest of the household, fostering the ancient custom of his people, taught him to say the glorious *Shema* thrice daily, with all faithful Hebrew males: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." In the Nazareth home there had never been a time when the holy mystery of a Jehovah God had not made Jesus and the other children wonder. But as they heard the Old Testament read in the synagogue their wonder was not unmixed with fear. The thunders of Sinai were real to them,

and the awful thoughts of God's holiness, justice, and kingly power. Their thought of Jehovah was of a God who was transcendent, remote from their daily living, whom it must have been very hard to love.

Yet the God of the *Magnificat* was no transcendent Jehovah. He was a God of great power, to be sure, who scattered the proud and put down princes from their thrones. But he was kind to the poor and the hungry and exalted them of low degree. He was a God of great tenderness and kindness; of this, the mother of Jesus seemed very sure. However one interprets the birth-stories, it seems clear that Mary of Nazareth, untutored woman of the hills though she was, felt God to be very real and strangely near. In the arms of such a faith was the child Jesus born. To such a God he was doubtless taught to pray before he even asked the reason why. Whether his mother first taught him to think of God as Father, or whether he experienced it in some other way, no one can dogmatize about. At least our last chapter shows that by the time he was twelve years of age he had discovered it. "Knew ye not," he asked his anxious parents, "that I must be in my Father's house?"

The unusual religious genius of the Boy of Galilee made him very susceptible to God, as the creative nucleus of everything beautiful, true, and noble. It is clear that he naturally saw God's life in the world about him, in the beauty of the fields

and flowers, the grandeur of the mountains and the skies; and this gave meaning to life for him. It was God's world. He was caring for it. He was even clothing the green fields with the beauty of the lilies, and caring for the birds of the heaven, so that not one of them fell in a helpless swoon from his neglect. He was sending his sun and rain to bless alike all the sons of men, just and unjust the same. This led Jesus gradually to see the providence of God over his people. There is compassionate love in his heart. There is an infinite kindness in his mercies. He will not give his children a stone for bread, any more than would a human father; and even the hairs of our head he has numbered, so complete is his providence. Therefore Jesus felt no anxiety for the needs of the morrow, for food and raiment, for shelter, for human comradeship; for the Father knew what he had need of before he asked him.

This absolute dependence upon God and assurance of his care was no mere belief. It was experimental faith, the outgrowth of some poignant experience. Something had happened which had brought God suddenly near the Youth of Galilee, and in the emergency God had not failed him. It is rather safe to guess what that testing experience was. The one dark event of those silent years in that Nazareth home, that we know must have happened, was the death of Joseph, the father of the family. As suggested at the end of our last chapter,

it precipitated in the experience of Jesus his first emotional crisis, especially if, according to tradition, it occurred early, when he was still in his teens. His world, in his first bitter sense of loss, seemed to fall in ruins. But the kindly sun shone again next morning, and friendly neighbors brought sympathy and comfort, and very likely many substantial proofs of good neighborliness.

During the trying weeks and months which followed, while the capable Mary, with at least seven children, was making necessary adjustments, Jesus, the oldest son, was rebuilding his world. Sudden maturity came upon him, and a fresh sense of God's reality, nearness and power. Reaching out for God in daily emergencies he found him near. God became for him all that Joseph had been, whom he had so deeply loved, admired, and trusted. Fatherhood was for him suddenly deified. Into the purity of his stainless life, God's spirit could fully come. Without the impending medium of sin, that closeness of communion with God became uniquely possible which led him to say, years after, "I and my Father are one." Thus the years of burdensome toil, while he labored to support his mother and her children, were lightened by an experience of God as his Father such as only a spiritual genius with unusual intuitive power of spiritual insight could fully achieve. It made life a high and holy adventure for the Youth of Galilee.

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN

"Brave Mary, fluent-minded, set him free.
But Joseph to the little Jesus gave
The vision of a father strong to save.
From earthly fatherhood to heavenly
Was but a step for Jesus. Trustfully
He tells a father's care—"The very hairs
Upon your head are numbered." Thus He dares—
A son of man—the Son of God to be.

No later word of Joseph do we hear.
Perhaps he died—his spirit, yet more near
To Jesus, merged in God's great Fatherhood—
The rock on which his later sons have stood.
For that a man named Joseph loved his son
We pray Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." ¹

It is occasionally claimed that Jesus learned the Fatherhood of God simply from his own Bible, the Old Testament. Let us see to what extent this may have been true. The modern Jews teach the divine Fatherhood and are inclined to claim that it is their ancient heritage. Rabbi Samuel Schulman says, in a contemporary booklet, "The Jewish conception of God is that of the One Creator of the Universe and the Father of mankind." ² What basis for this teaching do they find in their holy Scriptures? Including both Old Testament and the books of the Apocrypha we find at least 2,685 references to God,³ of

¹ Mrs. Arthur C. McGiffert, in *The Congregationalist*. Quoted with permission of the publisher.

² Dr. Samuel Schulman, *Jewish Ethics*, p. 6.

³ Cruden's *Complete Concordance*.

which only twelve in the Old Testament use the word Father in any sense, and six more in the books of the Apochrypha.⁴ Of these twelve Old Testament passages, six refer plainly to God as Father of the Hebrew people. One refers to him as Father of the Messiah, and one as Father of the king's son; one as stepfather of the fatherless, and the other three use the word only as a simile, not a statement. Of the Apochryphal passages, two refer to God as Father of the tribe or nation, one as Father of the Messiah, and the remaining three as Father of the writer of the book in a personal sense.

Not a single one of these passages uses the term Father in the deeply intimate sense of Jesus' experience; yet the *word* does occur, in these exceedingly few and scattered verses in Jesus' Bible. It is doubtful if he got very much inspiration for his thought from them, though they must have caught his eye; and his imagination may have been kindled by the simile in Psalm 103:13, "Like as a Father pitieth his children . . .", and especially Ecclesiasticus 23:1 which prays to God thus: "O Lord, Father and Governor of all my whole life." It is not likely that he derived his ideal of God from the non-canonical writings of the rabbis, for these are mainly commentaries on the Scriptures, particularly the Law, quite lacking in originality.

⁴ 2 Samuel 7:14; Isaiah 63:16 and 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4, 19 and 31:9; Proverbs 3:12; Psalms 68:5, 89:26 and 103:13; Malachi 1:6 and 2:10. Also 2 Esdras 1:28 and 2:5; Wisdom 14:3; Ecclesiasticus 23:1, 4 and 51:10.

What degree of originality, then, can we claim for Jesus in his discovery of God's Fatherhood? It is plain that he did not originate the name; in fact, his people did not. A number of nations in ancient days thought of their god in terms of a father, that is, the father of the tribe or nation. This same conception was shared by the Hebrews, but to a very slight degree. Very rarely did the Hebrew prophets or writers think of Jehovah as a Father, and almost never in a personal sense. Their Jehovah's regal transcendence totally eclipsed his Fatherhood. When the spiritual genius of Jesus discovered God as his heavenly Father and the Father of us all, what he actually did was to take the name, which he found in his Bible, and then, in the pregnant matrix of his unique mystical experience, clothe it with new meaning, a more vitally personal and intimate significance than it ever had had in the Old Testament. And he brought his heavenly Father infinitely *near*. He transformed a shadowy title of oriental politeness into something supremely meaningful to build his world around and to conceive as the corner stone of his world-redeeming Gospel. This was spiritual originality of the highest order.

Within the meager limits of the Gospels Jesus refers to God as his Father no less than 153 times, and almost never speaks of him in any other terms. This shows how thoroughly this thought of the divine paternity possessed his mind. What was a most unusual allusion to God in the Old Testament,

so rare as to be quite negligible, becomes basic and essential in Jesus' experience. The Old Testament writers barely touched on the fringe of God's Fatherhood, in a very tentative, incidental way. What seems but a nominal belief to them became an intimate reality, a deep conviction to him, something supernal to live by. A scholarly Jew of our generation, Rabbi Trattner, recognizes the true significance of this unique contribution of Jesus. He believes that Jesus "gave a fine intensity and an appealingly mystic quality to the concept of the Fatherhood of God." ⁵ Furthermore he sees this illustrated in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, which he refers to as "the matchless illustration of God's forgiving love. . . . Here Jesus talks with spiritual sovereignty to all the generations of men."

To borrow the happy phrase of this broad-minded Jew, the *spiritual sovereignty of Jesus* for all the generations of men goes back for its origin and its authority to his genuine originality as a spiritual seer in discovering and revealing the *full meaning* of the Fatherhood of God. Timid Christians who hesitate to claim originality here for their Master should study carefully the tribute of the discerning rabbi quoted above. The originality lies not merely in the terminology; but in the warm, pregnant, creative content which Jesus gave to the word. After all it is the substance which counts, not the shell. To

⁵ Ernest R. Trattner, *As a Jew Sees Jesus*. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted with their permission.

find his way trustfully and experimentally to that point of close friendship with God in which he could speak like a trustful child to the Holy One of Israel, as his heavenly Father, was surely, as Bundy says, "a tremendous triumph in the human quest for God." It was a most significant way-mark of progress in the history of religion.

It has proved a great thing for humanity that although Jesus was profoundly influenced by the ancient prophets' thought of God's holiness, these traditional beliefs of his people did not make him think of God as unapproachable, or inscrutable, an awesome, regal, Jovelike Jehovah. The fear of God did not frighten or discourage him, because his attitude toward God was *essentially childlike*. He gradually won for himself the experience of God as his heavenly Father by approaching him as a child who loved and trusted him and who sought above all things to learn and to do his will.

Hence Jesus found the response of his Father to be a great outgoing love, and a sharing of both his overflowing goodness and his infinite wisdom, which gave Christ his message, his redemptive Gospel for the world. "I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father. . . . As my Father hath taught me, I speak of these things. . . . I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding and hast revealed them unto babes. Yea, Father,

for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth anyone know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”⁶

With the sudden expansion of our knowledge of the universe it is not strange that the modern Christian has had misgivings about the simple formula for God implied in Jesus' name for him, Our Father in Heaven. The paralysis which has struck the nerve of prayer in modernist churches is probably due to the growing pervasion of the thought of God not as Father but as Force. And no one prays to Force, except in blind protest or despair.

Many have found the concept of personality too belittling for a Universe-God. It seems difficult to hold the Force and Father concepts of God simultaneously. Yet the pragmatic aspect of the problem is arresting. As Miss Kirkland suggests, until our modern Force-concept of a God devoid of personality succeeds in producing a character nearer the spiritual stature of Jesus Christ, we should not hastily abandon his faith in the Father-God. No one has yet progressed further in the achievement of personality than did Jesus; and it was his faith in his heavenly Father that achieved it. It is highly significant that “that man in history who most devel-

⁶ John 5:30, 8:28, 16:32; Matt. 11:25-29.

oped his own personality was also that man in history who most believed in the personality of God." *

But Jesus' term Father as applied to God could not have had its simple, limited, human meaning. To him God was not without mystery. In fact Jesus would surely have granted him fathomless mystery. His Fatherhood was only the hither side of the infinite mystery, the phase that Jesus felt he could best understand. This means it was really an infinite Fatherhood of which he was thinking. Infinite Fatherhood is itself a fathomless mystery. At least it is the super-fatherhood of a super-personality. If the ape and the idiot are sub-personal, God as Father may clearly be called super-personal. God is not mere personality, that is, personality is not all of God and need not be. He is personality-plus. Personal fatherhood, even super-personal fatherhood, does not exhaust him, for he is infinite. And his plus-personality may easily mean, God is Father plus Force. He may be infinite force, fathomless energy, and still on the man-ward side of his functioning have the moral aspects of an infinite Father. The importance of all this lies in the fact that if God should lose his moral qualities, then he could no longer possess character. He would no longer be love. Then the God of Jesus would be no more.

After all our philosophizing we shall always come back to the Christ and stand in reverence before the

* Winifred Kirkland, *Portrait of a Carpenter*, p. 155. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons and used by permission.

perfect character achieved by faith in the Father-God. But he also achieved this concept of the Fatherhood, in its completeness. It is probable that the world would never have heard of the Carpenter of Nazareth, save for this supreme achievement of the noblest conception of God the mind of man has ever realized. This is the corner stone of his whole fabric of a Gospel for an unjust world. It is the *sine qua non* of a social religion of human brotherhood; for there can be no universal brotherhood save as the corollary to the universal Fatherhood. No religion can furnish spiritual dynamic to produce a world of social justice save one which can convince humanity of this intensely human and fatherly quality which Jesus discovered in God. Some epochal day the rulers of human destinies will awake to see that all men must be treated as brothers, because we are all in the beloved family of a common Father. Then the Seer of Galilee will come into his own.

IV

WHAT THE CARPENTER OWED TO HIS BIBLE

JESUS had no Bible, if you mean by it a single volume, inspired from cover to cover. But doubtless in the Nazareth synagogue he did have a rich collection of rolls of sacred Scriptures, written by three types of religious leaders in Hebrew history, the Priests, the Prophets, and the Wise Men. Like a loyal Jew he revered this threefold record of the religious experience of his people. It was his great literary source of spiritual inspiration and religious authority. As a youth he must have studied faithfully the sacred rolls, for his teachings, like Lincoln's addresses and state papers, reveal extreme familiarity with his Bible. As a child in the synagogue school he received instruction in the Law, and all his life as a worshiper in the synagogue he heard the Scriptures read, so his mind was saturated with Bible language and ideas.

This is evidenced by the frequent quotations in his teachings, especially from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms; but even more from the numerous informal allusions in his everyday conversations, many of which very likely slipped from his tongue half unconsciously, the Biblical language was so familiar

to him. For instance, when he replied to the lawyer who had quoted to him the twofold summary of the law, "Thou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live," he was making a veiled allusion to Leviticus 18:5 which says: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them."

Growing up in liberal, democratic Galilee, Jesus had little contact with the aristocratic priestly caste that had always been so powerful at Jerusalem. It is not strange, therefore, that the religion of the priests did not seem to inspire him, nor the priestly portion of his Bible greatly interest him. For instance, the priestly book, Leviticus, he quotes from but once in his reported sayings. It is significant that in doing so, he selected the least priestly verse in the twenty-seven chapters, the greatest message of the book: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."¹ That the priests of his acquaintance did not always live up to this law may be surmised from the satirical treatment Jesus gave the priest in his parable of the Good Samaritan.

The priestly ritual of religious formalism did not appeal to him, least of all their burnt-offerings, offered too frequently as a substitute for character. He must have been deeply stirred by the age-long conflict between the religion of the priests and the religion of the prophets, that he found in Amos 7:1-17 and Isaiah 1:10-17 and many other passages.

¹ Leviticus 19:19.

In this contest he sympathized strongly with the prophets, as his teachings clearly indicate. He surely appreciated what the old prophet Samuel said to King Saul: "Doth Jehovah take as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."¹

We may be sure that one of his heroes, as an imaginative boy, was the dauntless Elijah, whose brave stand before the wicked Jezebel, the weak Ahab and their priests of Baal saved the worship of Jehovah from extinction. How he must have admired the heroic Amos for daring to denounce a corrupt king and priest for their wickedness and insincerity! That noble prophet's challenge, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream,"² must have thrilled his honest soul.

As he studied the writings of those ancient champions of social religion, one after another they lived again in his heart and he entered deeply into their experiences. Their dauntless courage, their utter loyalty to Jehovah God, their demand for heart righteousness and social justice, and their staunch defense of the oppressed and needy won his high admiration. He made them the heroes of his youth. Their ideals won his full allegiance. Their religion appealed to him as so thoroughly genuine and whole-souled, it made the religion of the priests

¹ 1 Samuel 15:22.

² Amos 5:24.

seem very petty and meaningless in contrast. It made him glad he was not born into the priestly caste, but was an independent layman of the tribe of Judah.

Even in some of the so-called lesser prophets he found constant inspiration. That champion of the down-trodden poor, the prophet Micah, made him long to enlist in the same great cause. And Micah's wonderful description of true religion must have found an echo in the heart of the Nazarene: "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" ⁴ The loving kindness of God which Joel proclaimed, and his infinite compassion which Hosea both taught and demonstrated, came so close to his own ideals of living that he might well have taken the latter's text for his own life purpose: "For I desire kindness rather than sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." ⁵ It is not surprising that we find no evidence in his teachings that he ever read anything but the religious literature of his own race. But he certainly found in the writings of the prophets the messages of kindred souls, and they were profoundly influential in so directing his fundamental thinking that in his public ministry he really became a successor to the prophets rather than the priests.

The hall-mark of the prophet as a religious leader in Israel was always that of the layman. He was no professional ecclesiastic. In this respect Jesus always

⁴ Micah 6:8.

⁵ Hosea 6:6.

ran true to form. He was no priest, Levite, nor rabbi. He was never a traditionalist. His respect for Holy Writ never made him a bibliolater. He owed much to his Bible, but we may be sure he never worshiped it. Nor did he think it above criticism. His keen ethical discrimination even as a child must have seen the great moral contrasts in the Bible and its natural development from primitive ideals in its crude beginnings to the noble ideals of Isaiah and Micah. We can imagine his arguing with the village scribe against the cruelty of human sacrifices and the awfulness of Jephtha's vow and his sacrifice of his own daughter. We cannot doubt that when the synagogue ritual called for the reciting of the imprecatory Psalms, especially the 137th, the young man Jesus rebelled. To him all children were precious. Why should even the children of Babylon be "dashed against the stones?"

He had such Psalms in mind doubtless when he referred to the traditional teaching of the Law, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." * Though the Hebrew law nowhere enjoins the hating of enemies, Psalm 137 is an awful demonstration of it, and even that Psalm of great spiritual insight, the 139th, lapses into this dreadful sentence in its closing paragraph, "Do I not hate them, O Jehovah, that hate Thee? I hate them with perfect

* Matthew 5:43.

hatred: they are become mine enemies." ⁷ This rankled in Jesus' mind with all the force of a counter-irritant, and helped make clear to him the moral necessity for that most revolutionary of all his teachings: "But I say unto you, love your enemies." ⁸

His ethical rebellion against the moral crudities of the early part of the Scriptures he was taught in the synagogue school may have earned for him rather early in youth the reputation as a heretic, which finally drove him from Nazareth. His keen moral sense forced him to take the rôle of a higher critic. We cannot believe he waited until his career as a public teacher before saying: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of olden time, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; ⁹ but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil." ¹⁰ Six times in that revolutionary chapter he refers to the Old Testament traditions thus, either to challenge them flatly or to supplement them with his own spiritual amendments and interpretations. How keen are his moral discriminations that hatred is the essence of murder, and impure imagination the cause of adultery!

Yet he was always a constructive critic. It is in this same chapter that Jesus asserts his most outspoken approval of the Bible as a whole: "Think not that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets: I

⁷ Psalm 139:21-.

⁸ Matthew 5:44.

⁹ Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:38.

came not to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law till all things be accomplished." ¹¹ As if to say, Don't call me an iconoclast. I appreciate our great racial traditions even if I do not worship them or consider them above criticism. We must not neglect nor relax them. We must improve on them. Most certainly must we improve on the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven.

It is very clear that Jesus found profound inspirations for his social religion in the Old Testament prophets. The roots of social Christianity are obviously there. But Jesus also owed to his Bible light and leading for personal living, strength for emergencies, and comfort in great sorrow. In his severe moral testing during those forty days in the wilderness it is evident that his memory of the Scriptures helped him to think clearly and to be strong in fighting temptation. All the accounts of the crucifixion show clearly that throughout that terrible experience the twenty-second and thirty-first Psalms were running through his mind and brought him solace and courage.

He must have used his Bible constantly to nourish and sustain his personal piety; though it is not certain that he possessed private copies of any of the rolls of Scriptures. He probably depended largely on

¹¹ Matthew 5:17-.

memory and frequent reading in the synagogue.¹² It is interesting to note that he was not interested in the web-spinning, allegorical method of abusing the Scripture, common both in his day and since; a custom in which even Paul occasionally indulged.¹³ Nor did he enjoy the rabbinical method of exegesis, with its abstruse and academic handling of the text; though he did find his Bible a constant source book of concrete illustrations, as his numerous allusions to biblical characters show. The revolutionary trend of his thinking in his early years was stimulated by some of the more recent writings of his people, such as the book of Daniel and other apocalyptic literature, the book of Enoch, the book of Esdras, and other portions of the Apochrypha and even later books like the Psalms of Solomon, which Jesus quite likely included in his Bible.

Thus Jesus owed to his Bible the terms Son of Man, Kingdom of Heaven, The Messiah, and the Day of the Lord, to all of which he gave new meanings. He owed to his Bible the traditional religious views of his people, to which he gave fresh interpretations and more triumphant faith; also the conceptions of social righteousness and social justice which he found in the religion of the prophets. It was, therefore, due to his independent, non-professional

¹² In 1 Maccabees 1:56, 57, however, we do find a reference to the possession and use of private "books of the Law" in the homes of the devout Jews not long before the time of Jesus. Such manuscript copies, however, must have been expensive and rare because of the cost of paper.

¹³ Galatians 4:24-.

study of the Scriptures, perhaps as much as to his spiritual intuitions as a religious genius, that he found himself in early manhood an honest radical with many hot question-marks of revolution in his mind.

V

HOW RELIGION GREW AT THE CARPENTER'S BENCH

MOST writers have neglected to note the influence of Jesus' trade as a carpenter upon his growing religious experience as youth and man. That it furnished an ideal laboratory for his experiments in personal relations and Christian good will cannot be doubted. If he had been born in a rich man's palace, what chance would he have had to discover first hand the experiences and needs of the average man, and what appeal would he ever have had to such people? If he had been reared in comfort, spending his life as a professional man, he would have missed the practical experience of working with tools and materials, and the problems and simple joys involved in producing tangible results of his manual skill. Such things loom large in the daily experience of the common man, whom Jesus had to understand in order to help.

It has often been noted that although Nazareth for some reason had a bad reputation, it was at the cross-roads of the busiest part of Palestine, and was therefore an ideal home village for an alert boy to grow up in who desired many contacts with life.

The great caravan routes to Damascus, to Tyre, to Arabia, and to Egypt passed through or near it, and a garrison of Roman soldiers was only five miles to the westward. So a Nazareth boy did not need to travel to see the world. Much of the world came to his door. From the hilltop three minutes' walk back of his home he could see more than half of Palestine, from the gleaming shore line of the Mediterranean on the west to the Midian plateau and the eastern desert; and southward across the historic plain of Esdraelon to the Samaritan hills and the mountains north of the Holy City.

What a vantage point of vision for the dreams of youth! The panorama of his country's history lay before him. It must have been a daily inspiration, challenging him to make his life count, to live up to the noble record of his forefathers. The ancient Hebrews, unlike their neighbors, the Phœnicians, took little interest in life upon the sea. The only "sea" mentioned in the Gospels is the little lake of Galilee. Yet when the Boy of Nazareth saw ships but sixteen miles away on the Great Sea, his imagination must sometimes have leaped to the great world of the Roman Empire beyond his ken.

On his return from that first wonderful journey to Jerusalem with his deepened sense of responsibility and life's meaning, Jesus without doubt welcomed the chance to help in the home carpenter shop. As the oldest son that career was his destiny, and for some twenty years he made it the work of his life.

In one of the ancient papyrus fragments referred to on page nine we find this significant sentence from the non-biblical sayings of Jesus:

"In the cleaving of the wood you shall find fellowship with me; in the lifting of the stone, there am I."

This mysterious passage, quite probably from the Master himself, finds ready interpretation when we recall that the housebuilder of those ancient days, as is still true in oriental countries bereft of timber, has to be a stonemason as well as carpenter. This sentence reminds us of the Carpenter's heavy task of cleaving logs of wood with the axe and the old-fashioned adze, and the back-breaking labor of lifting heavy stones into their places in the wall or foundation of the house he was building. It is the Carpenter's call to all manual toilers to find fellowship with him in their daily work. No verse from the Gospels brings us more directly into the atmosphere of the Carpenter's shop. There is a poem by Arthur Pierce Vaughn (*The Outlook*, Jan. 2, 1904) that we have treasured many years because it helps to visualize the Master at work in his simple oriental workshop:

HANDS OF TOIL

"In the shop at Nazareth
Pungent cedar haunts the breath.
'Tis a low, eastern room,
Windowless, touched with gloom.
Workman's bench and simple tools
Line the walls; chests and stools,

Yoke of ox and shaft of plow
Finished by the Carpenter
Lie upon the pavement now.

In the shop the Craftsman stands,
Stands and reaches out his hands.
Let the shadows veil his face if you must,
And dimly trace his workman's tunic,
Girt with bands at the waist. But his hands
Let the shadows play on them;
Marks of toil lay on them.
Paint with passion and with care
Every old scar showing there
Where a tool slipped, and hurt;
Be alert for each deep sign of toil.
Show the soil of the pitch, and the strength
Grip of helve gives at length.

When night comes, and I turn from my shop
Where I earn daily bread, may I see
Those hard hands stretched toward me;
Know that he shared my lot, every bit,
Was a man, every whit.
Carpenter, hard like thine is this hand
This of mine I stretch forth, gripping thee
Close to me, close and fast, fearlessly."

Visitors in Nazareth may still see, on the "Street of the Carpenters" and the "Street of the Blacksmiths," tiny shops meeting just such a description, windowless and with earthen floors. They open at daybreak and close at sundown, for in that land without electric light, "The night cometh when no man can work." ¹

¹ John 9:4.

When Jesus early in his public ministry began to teach in the home synagogue, one day some one in astonishment said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?"³ And another said, "What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this *the carpenter*, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?"⁴ Besides the work of the housebuilder, we learn from Justin Martyr that Jesus made plows and yokes for oxen.⁵ Naturally he also built the simple furniture used in the homes of the village. And an important part of his work, though not the easiest nor the most agreeable, was the repairing of roofs, which, in the windy, torrential storms of the rainy season were constantly needing repair.

It is clear that this interesting variety of constructive work formed an important factor in the education of the youth Jesus through several formative years. It all had a determining influence in developing his religion. His business relations taught him much about human character. He found many customers critical, some of them slow in paying their bills, some over-reaching and dishonest in their oriental bargaining. He may have had to go into the

³ Matthew 13:54.

⁴ Mark 6:2, 3.

⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogues*, Chapter 38. (Middle of second century.)

labor market for additional workers at different hours of the day, and finding men who were greatly in need of work, may have sometimes paid them at the end of their labor, as Doctor Bosworth suggests, in a quixotic way, not according to their actual earnings but in accordance with their needs.⁵

The references in his teachings to unjust wealthy men were probably based on his own experience with such men in business relations. He had plenty of chance to see the bad effect of wealth upon character. He had seen men respected in the community for their religious prominence foreclose mortgages on the little homes of widows, else he never could have said: "Beware of scribes that devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers." ⁶ No one has referred to the carpenter experiences of Jesus more suggestively than Dr. Studdert Kennedy, of London, in this little poem:

THE CARPENTER

"I wonder what he charged for chairs at Nazareth
And did men try to beat him down
And boast about it in the town—
'I bought it cheap for half a crown
From that mad Carpenter?'
And did they promise and not pay,
Put it off to another day;
Oh, did they break his heart that way,
My Lord, the Carpenter?

⁵ Matthew 20:1-16. See Bosworth, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus*, p. 57.

⁶ Mark 12:40.

I wonder did he have bad debts,
And did he know my fears and frets?
The Gospel writer here forgets
To tell about the Carpenter.
But that's just what I want to know.
Ah! Christ in glory, here below
Men lie and cheat each other so,
It's hard to be a carpenter." "

Repeatedly in the various Gospels we see evidences that Jesus fully understood the fundamental importance of foundations, in their moral, as well as material, significance. In Matthew 21:42 and Luke 20:17 he refers to "the stone which the builders rejected" that became the cornerstone. In Luke 14:28 he describes the man who failed to count the cost before starting to build the new watchtower in his vineyard, and so had to stop, having barely finished the foundations. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount he gives his very telling parable of the Two Builders, a story that suggests extensive experience in housebuilding back of it:

"Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." "

¹ *Literary Digest*, Jan. 14, 1928.

² Matthew 7:24-27.

Even in his short life Jesus had lived long enough to see flimsy houses on poor foundations fall in complete ruin in the rainy season, and also to see human characters, not founded on a firm religious basis, meet with a similar catastrophe when the storm of temptation arose. It did not require many years of observation for him to discover that the only permanent foundation for Christian character, capable of standing the storms of life without collapsing, was a mighty faith in God. He found this quality of faith in his friend Simon, and on the day that Peter made his great confession Jesus said to himself, This is the kind of faith I can bank on and build on. So he said to Simon, "Thou art Peter (Pétros) and upon this rock (pétra) I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *

It is not difficult to imagine what sort of a carpenter Jesus was and the quality of work he did. If there was another shop of the same trade in Nazareth, and there doubtless was, it would not have been difficult to identify the work that was done by the firm of Jesus and Brothers. His ideal was nothing short of perfection in work or character. When he said, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," he certainly meant to obligate himself. Well he knew that perfect workmanship and perfect motives in one's work were prime requisites in the complete and unblemished life. That table was not made in his carpenter shop

* Matthew 16:18.

if it tilted nervously on four uneven legs, and was constructed out of shaky lumber, badly seasoned, and with several knots in it, carefully concealed where they might escape notice; and the whole deceptive job well puttied and painted to look as innocent as a whited sepulcher. No, that table may have come from some Judas or Barabbas shop, but it never came from the house of Joseph. The religion that grew in the Carpenter's shop developed superb ideals of fine workmanship. We may be sure there was no skimping of materials, no cheating in the time-reckoning, the estimating of costs, or the billing, certainly no overcharging. Every house he built was finished with scrupulous honesty and would stand plumb and level for many a year.

The religion that grew at the Carpenter's bench could not have been a religion of Sabbath punctiliousness and orthodoxy, and of week-day shabbiness and meanness. It was not a religion of formal ritualistic worship and a daily practice which belied the lip-service. It was a practical religion which carried the realization of partnership with God and a vivid sense of duty into the details of living. The religious ideals of the Carpenter stood the laboratory test of honest work and faithful friendship.

There was, to be sure, a deal of dreaming, while adze and saw and plane were being driven by the strong muscles, well-trained for their accustomed task. The active mind roamed far-a-field while the whipcord muscles almost automatically followed

the familiar routine. The dream was of a better world, but first of all a redeemed, triumphant Israel, and the coming of the prophetic Day of the Lord. Furthermore this religion, wrought out at the Carpenter's bench as on some mighty anvil or in some cosmic loom, was intensely personal, as the Nazarene, bound to his trade and his bench for twenty years by a masterful sense of duty to the family of the beloved Joseph who had gone, still dreamed of the day of release of the superman within him. He harbored a haunting vision of wider service of his humbled, subject people, bound to the chariot wheels of Rome, and yet more abject slaves to a formal, priestly religion, quite lacking in redemptive power.

Thus the religion of the Carpenter was working a quiet miracle in his own spirit, as he felt within him the welling up of the indwelling life of God, his heavenly Father. He was transcending the original dimensions of the personality of his trusting youth. He was almost unconsciously growing into the stature of coming leadership when strong men of loyal and adventurous heart were to call him *Master!*

"O Master of the callous hand,
The workshop and the bench and plane,
We know that thou canst understand
Our hopes, our labors, and our pain.
We see the drops of honest toil
With which thy hardy face was wet,

And in thy beauty-loving eye
The craftsman's kindling pleasure glow
To see the finished work put by,
The joy that patient workmen know.
We answer gladly to thy call,
O Master workman of us all.

O rugged Master of the hills,
The desert and the storm-swept sea,
Our eager heart responsive thrills
In our enlarging thought of thee.
Thou lovedst well the open road,
The pilgrim staff, the pilgrim load,
As o'er the hills of Palestine
Beneath the parching eastern blaze
Those eager, tireless feet of thine
Trod joyously the crowded ways,
To minister to human need,
Thou Savior of the world, indeed."

—*Author unidentified.*

VI

CHALLENGING VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

THE Carpenter of Nazareth lived his life in a tumultuous age. It was a generation surprisingly free from war throughout the Roman world, but in Palestine eager and restless young men found plenty of war's "moral equivalent." Like our own day the early decades of the first century were seething with revolutionary ideas in religion, politics, and social ethics. The country was split up into parties, some extremely conservative, some with quite radical aims. The reactionary Sadducees, rich, aristocratic, complacently fraternizing with their Roman overlords, had nothing in common with the Galilean. The patriotic Pharisees of the warmer type, with more spiritual faith, may sometimes have appealed to him, though their formalism and legalism he could never condone.

In the freer air of Galilee and quite outside all professional groups, Jesus' mind was free from bias and evidently venturesome enough to start a youth movement. So very daring was he in attacking every sort of injustice and chicanery during his public career, regardless of where the chips flew, we may be certain in his eager youth he was so adventurous

in his sympathies and convictions that his stand-pat neighbors thought him a revolutionist. Quite likely he was attracted to a certain revolutionary movement led by two patriotic young zealots, Saddouk the Pharisee and Judas the Galilean, that spread through the country like wildfire during Jesus' later boyhood. It had important religious aspects, as well as political, and appealed strongly to the noble-spirited youth of the nation who were praying for freedom and a restoration of the ancient glory of Israel. They were bitterly opposed to any foreign tyranny, even the astute, usually cautious suzerainty of Rome. They eagerly read the stories of high heroism in the books of the Maccabees telling of their triumph over the cruel Syrian power two centuries before. Judas and Saddouk made vigorous protest against both the system and the principle of Roman taxation, claiming that to pay tribute to Rome was the beginning of virtual slavery for the nation. Vigorously these ardent young patriots urged their fellow countrymen to rise and assert their independence.

When a movement combines the two powerful emotions of patriotic and religious loyalties it makes a subtle appeal to idealistic youth. Jesus must have felt the pull of this revolutionary movement all through his young manhood. The suspicion of it followed him all his life. Late in his teaching ministry he was questioned by one of his enemies in Jerusalem about this dangerous issue of Roman taxation, in the hope that he would incriminate himself

as one of the Galilean revolutionists.¹ With keen mental acumen he evaded the dilemma as skillfully as a Philadelphia lawyer. Yet a few days later, when he was brought to trial before Pilate, part of the accusation against him was that he had forbidden the people to pay tribute to Cæsar, though in all probability the charge was entirely false. It is not likely that Jesus ever joined the revolution of Judas and Saddouk. It is not explicitly mentioned in any of the Gospels, though we find an interesting reference to it in the Book of the Acts, by the famous teacher Gamaliel speaking before the rest of the Sanhedrin in defense of Peter and the other disciples.²

Another contemporary sect among the Jews, to which Jesus may have given some attention, was the small but intensely earnest group called the Essenes. Theirs was a mystery cult with secret doctrines and lofty moral standards. They were famous for their kindness, truthfulness and cleanliness, and were respected by the people, though not popular with the religious leaders of the Jews because they did not believe in killing animals for the Temple sacrifices. The Essenes did not marry, but lived as celibate monks on large farms south of Judea and in a few towns of Palestine, holding all their property in common. Unquestionably the deeply earnest Carpenter

¹ Matthew 22:17.

² Acts 5:37.

felt the spiritual appeal of these quiet and kindly Essenes. They were the Quakers of his day. Some think he came into close relations with them, to see if their ideals satisfied the eager desire of his heart for a mystical fellowship with God, and comradeship with kindred spirits deeply inspired by the Old Testament prophets.

But Jesus was not permanently drawn to this quietistic sect. Its program was not vigorous enough to suit his adventurous mind. It was too passive in its attitude toward the great Messianic hope of Israel which throbbed in his heart and surged through all the contemporary life of his people. For generations the Hebrew people had been stirred by the most vivid messages of their prophets and the cumulative hopes of later writers to believe fervently that although they had long been a subject people, down-trodden and grievously oppressed at times, their day of deliverance would surely come. Were they not Jehovah's chosen people? He would surely send his Anointed One to drive their enemies into the sea and set up again the throne of David on a grander scale than ever, as a masterful world power. The Deliverer would establish the kingdom of the heavens and consecrate anew his holy people for a splendid mission in the world.

All classes among the Hebrews cherished this challenging national ambition, though the dream existed in a hundred shadowy forms and widely varying de-

grees of mystical, spiritual, or materialistic, martial, and imperialistic emphasis. In militaristic minds with political ambitions the dream largely took the form of earthly conquest by supernatural aid and force of arms, and continuance of the present state of earthly life. The more spiritual and less optimistic dreamed of a glorious millennium, but only at the cost of life in the present age which must be spiritualized and transformed before the Son of Man could come in his glory. That Jesus shared these eschatological dreams and beliefs of his people cannot be doubted. Many modern writers consider them the master-key to his teachings and his strong sense of mission.

Certain it is that Jesus' adventurous mind, in those days of turmoil and latent revolution in his beloved Galilee, had been greatly stirred by some of the challenging later writers of his race. Just imagine how it thrilled him to read such messianic passages as these from the book of Enoch:

"And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
Shall put down the kings and the mighty from their seats,
And the strong from their thrones, . . .
Because they do not extol and praise him,
Nor humbly acknowledge whence the Kingdom was bestowed upon them. . . ."

For that Son of Man has appeared,
And has seated himself on the throne of his glory,
And all evil shall pass away before his face.*

* Enoch 46:4-6.

* Enoch 69:29.

He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall,
And he shall be a light to the Gentiles,
And the hope of those who are troubled of heart." *

And think how this passage from the "Psalms of the Pharisees" fired his imagination as it describes what the coming Son of David shall do to deliver his people and establish his reign of righteousness:

"And he shall gather together a holy people whom he shall lead in righteousness,
And he shall judge the tribes of the people that have been sanctified by the Lord his God.
And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst,
Nor shall there dwell with them any man that knoweth wickedness,
For he shall know them all as sons of their God.
And he himself will be pure from sin so that he may rule a great people.
He will rebuke rulers and remove sinners by the might of his word;
And relying upon God throughout his days he will not stumble;
For God will make him mighty by means of his Holy Spirit,
And wise by means of the spirit of understanding with strength and righteousness." *

With his growing sense of mission in the world intensified by such writings as these, it is no wonder there came a day when the Carpenter of Nazareth grew so restive at his confining work that he had to

* Enoch 48:4.

* Psalms of the Pharisees 17:28-.

leave his bench and plane and start on his quest for that broader mission in the world which he had long believed God intended for him. His immediate objective was somewhere south in the Jordan valley. There a fiery reformer who called himself just "a Voice crying in the wilderness" was proclaiming a revolutionary message the echoes of which sounded to Jesus like the voice of a kindred spirit.

When Jesus reached the place where John was preaching, he found a striking figure, plainly the product of the wilderness life. He was clad in most primitive garb of his own fashioning, quite evidently imitating the appearance as well as the spirit of his life-long hero, the prophet Elijah.⁷ His fiery messages, inspired by intense moral earnestness and made all the more striking by his dramatic personality, produced a great sensation as his ringing voice shot forth from the background of the rocky cliffs behind him. It was soon noised abroad that a new prophet had arisen in the Judean wilderness, a striking man with a message of power. Travelers told their friends in Jerusalem, and all kinds of curiosity seekers came out on the Jericho road and into the rocky wilderness to hear him. They soon found they were not on a pleasure trip. As they listened to his hissing, hot words their faces grew pale with a sense of shame. He did not feel obliged to use polite language! He called them sons of vipers, and

⁷ Luke 1:17; Malachi 4:5, 6.

warned them to quit their meanness and flee from the wrath to come.

Such brave, direct preaching produced immediate results. The folks who came to laugh remained to pray. This whirlwind of a man knew the facts, wherever he got them. So they threw up their hands in humble confession and simply asked "What shall we do about it?" It must have been real preaching to make rich snobs kind to the poor, to make grafting tax-collectors sorry for their injustice, and hard-hearted soldiers repent of their cruelty; and all anxious to accept the baptism he offered them, as a sign of their penitence and cleansing.

As the Nazarene Carpenter watched this dynamic demonstration of spiritual power he thought to himself: This is the real thing. This is genuine religion. It is a great movement. I want to throw my life in with it. So in exalted mood he sought and received John's baptism. It seems that while John was baptizing him there came a spiritual experience that was epoch-making in Jesus' career. It was a mystical experience in which he had a vivid sense of God's presence and heard his voice in his heart, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well-pleased." These few words were sufficiently upsetting to a modest young Carpenter from Galilee. They gave him the strong assurance of God's favor, and of a special relationship to him. The unavoidable inference, for a young man on the threshold of his life-work, was a divine call to unique service,

some form of apostleship, messiahship. He could not go back to Nazareth now. He must think over this unsettling, challenging experience, in some lonesome place free from interruption, and decide what God meant him to do with his life. The rocky, bleak mountain near Jericho offered just such a retreat.

VII

VICTORY OVER FALSE IDEALS

IN the personal religious life of Jesus there seems to have been a peculiar ebb and flow of spiritual ambition. At times he felt welling up within him a sense of unusual powers, challenging him to assert leadership and do great things in the world. Then ebb tide would come. His native humility would again take the helm. Back to his carpenter's tools he would go, his adventurous spirit for the time being quelled. But ere long the restless urge would again flow in as from the mighty tides of God. Something within would challenge him with the sense of duty unmet, of opportunity unrealized, of deep springs of spiritual energy demanding release. In one of these high moods he would read exalted passages from Isaiah, Micah, Zechariah, or Enoch, and would almost feel that he could become the Son of Man himself, the great Deliverer of his people, so urgent was the thrust of God within him, the uprush of untried powers of life.

Such was the flood tide of his spirit, when, that day by the Jordan, he had received the symbol of baptism from John. He had been deeply stirred by the note of reality in John's preaching. Somehow John had dared him to live dangerously, to cut loose

from safe moorings in Nazareth, to follow the urge of his deeper self within. Then came the Voice, out of the manifest presence of his Father-God. The message to his heart was unmistakable: He was "God's Son—the Beloved." It was a mystic call to some special service. God willed it; but what must it be? With a thrilling new sense of personal worth and of fresh responsibility, the young Carpenter sought a quiet retreat where he could think. It was some remote place in that rocky wilderness, sloping steeply up from the Dead Sea and the lower Jordan. There day after day, we are told, he faced God's challenge of his life and fought the battle of clashing ideals.

On the threshold of his career, as countless other young men have done, Jesus weighed all the alternatives of what to do with his life. Should he throw his lot in with the Essenes, the Zealots, the Pharisees, or stay with this fiery reformer John, as one of his disciples? In some way or other he must link up his life with the kingdom of God, of which all these parties then were thinking. Could it be that God was calling him to leadership in his kingdom? Might it be that he was the Son of David of whom the prophets wrote, and for whom the people for many years had been waiting? The very thought was startling; yet did not the Voice at his baptism suggest it?

But he doubted if he could ever be the sort of Messiah the people wanted, or the kind their leaders

were expecting. Certainly he could not be another Judas Maccabeus, to lead an army against the Roman power and set his people free. Nor could he be the sort of Messiah the Pharisees demanded. His ideals would not let him. The more he thought about it, the harder he found it was going to be to live up to the vision God had given him. How much easier it would be to go back to Nazareth and the familiar tasks at the carpenter's bench, and remain there the rest of his days!

Both Matthew and Luke tell us that for forty days his retreat in the wilderness lasted, while he struggled with severe temptations. As he was alone, the report must have come from his own lips. The temptations to use his life powers in unworthy ways must have been many and varied, in that long period of testing; but only three typical temptations are preserved for our study. It is clear from the first of these that Jesus' mind had been working on the assumption that he was the Son of God. This was the startling assurance given him at his baptism, which had changed the whole perspective of his life. The cynical voice of the Tempter challenged the very idea: "IF you are really Son of God, command these stones to become bread." It was more than a temptation to selfishness, to satisfy his craving for food, after his long fast. It was a temptation to use his strange new powers to bring in a kingdom of heaven based on comfort and serving bodily appetites and physical wants of men. This had never been his

ideal; but would it not be demanded of a popular Messiah? What if he should be able to feed the people with miraculous manna from heaven, would that satisfy the hungers of their hearts? "No," was his prompt decision. "It is not bread alone that keeps man alive, but the message of God to his soul." His favorite book of the Law, Deuteronomy, had come to his rescue and made it all clear.¹ He could never be content with a ministry to the physical needs of men; just catering to their selfish appetites. Not while men are starving for friendship, and dying for kindness and sympathy. Bread is essential, but it can never take the place of love.

The second temptation (taking Matthew's order) was doubtless typical of many. He had been thinking of the expectation of the Pharisees that when the Deliverer should come, his victory over Israel's oppressors would be a supernatural one. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts,"² was an ancient prophecy which gave them much encouragement. They felt sure that the true Deliverer, whenever he came, would be able to draw on the divine power to prove his authority in spectacular ways, and thus to terrify and subdue their superstitious enemies. So the Tempter suggested to Jesus to test the power of God by hurling himself from the topmost pinnacle of the Temple to the admiring multitudes in the court beneath. What a short cut it would be to spectacular glory! It would

¹ Deuteronomy 8:3.

² Zechariah 4:6.

make him at once the idol of the people, and the terror of his enemies.

Of course the trial would succeed, for had not Jehovah promised? "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone."^a Yes, this was the very thing shallow-minded people were expecting of their Messiah. But what would be the use of it, even should the foolish attempt succeed? It would do no one any good, even if it should do him no harm. Such recklessness would be tempting providence; and it is written, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God."^b Jesus decides that the apocalyptic sort of Messiah would not establish the kind of kingdom of heaven he believed in. So he stuck to his ideals, and won the victory over this temptation to abuse his power.

The final temptation described in this vivid account of the Master's battle in the wilderness is a highly symbolic one. It may be paraphrased thus:

"The Tempter then led him to the top of a very high mountain and let him see at a glance all the kingdoms of the world, with their pomp and glory. 'To you,' he said to Jesus, 'will I give all this authority and splendor, for it is mine to give to whom I will. If you will but do homage to me as your overlord, this shall all be yours.'"^c

Of course the experience was psychological; there is no such mountain! It was typical of all temptations to compromise with evil. And many such tempta-

^a Psalm 91:11, 12. ^b Deuteronomy 6:16. ^c Matthew 4:8, 9.

tions come to all of us. The penetrating keenness of this temptation shows that it was no sham battle Jesus was engaged in. He was fighting for his very soul. This was a specific temptation to Jesus to try to be a King-Messiah by making friends with the rich and powerful. If his resources of personal magnetism should be prostituted to the unworthy aim of winning by political wire-pulling the influential Sadducees, high priests, and other rulers, he might go far in the realm of politics. However preposterous, it was a dazzling prospect to the Carpenter of Nazareth. But the awful price was too high to pay for the glittering bauble. He dismissed it with another strong message from his Bible: "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." *

Whether Jesus at that early stage of his career really considered seriously the claims of messiahship, with all it involved in long Jewish tradition, is to be doubted. But he was evidently testing out the various implications of that baptismal title, Son of God, and the various current beliefs regarding the coming of the Kingdom. This was the burning question of his generation, as we shall discover in the next few chapters. The temptation narrative is a highly suggestive one, for it throws light on Jesus' state of mind just at the beginning of his public career. It shows him to be familiar with the religious background in Judea, and not much in sympathy with it.

* Deuteronomy 6:13.

It shows that at the very start his ideals were higher than those of the religious leaders of his day. It shows how thoroughly he knew his Bible, and how it helped him in his personal religion. It indicates the fine nobility of his attitude toward life and the part he himself was to play in it. Especially it shows the same anxiety, above all things, to learn the will of God and follow it, which we discover months later in Gethsemane. Incidentally it reminds us that "He was in all points tested, like as we are, yet without sin;" and suggests that the kind of a religion such a person as Jesus was able to demonstrate so nobly, in his conquest of temptation, is a religion the world needs.

As for his attitude toward his own life problem, it revealed rather definitely that though he still modestly avoided messianic ambitions, he had accepted a special call to serve his Father's cause. The kingdom of God needed his undivided service. Thanks to the clear air of his wilderness retreat, he was now able to see what sort of service that must be. Whatever the future Deliverer might do for their political welfare and national ambitions, *he* must save his people from their sins. His poor, distressed world needed a suffering servant of God such as Isaiah described. Such a Son of God he felt in his soul with God's help he could be. Let others be kings; he chose to be Savior.

VIII

A FIRST-CENTURY HERETIC EXPELLED FROM CHURCH

AFTER his unique experience in Judea, possibly running through several months, Jesus returned to his Nazareth home. Those challenging days with John by the Jordan, and the following weeks of soul-testing in the wilderness, had transformed life for the Nazarene. He was surer than ever of God and his claim on his life. More vivid than ever was his sense of mission in the world. Clearer than ever was his feeling that the New Age was speedily coming, the good news of which he was called to announce. It had all made life look so different to him, and had made religion seem so joyous, so transforming, so unlike the formal, traditional religion of the scribes, he felt he must share it all with his friends.

So we find him teaching in the village synagogues as he journeyed northward toward his boyhood home in the hills of Galilee; and with such convincing power that the rumor of his deeply impressive meetings spread throughout the district. Many were astonished at his teaching, and asked each other,

Where did he get such wisdom? Is he not the Nazarene carpenter? He seems to have won great popular favor, till he faced the stubborn prejudices of his own neighbors at home. We can imagine his eagerness to tell his old friends of the new experiences which had so transformed his world and had given life a glorious new meaning.

Whether he really expected to convince them and win them as converts to his joyous gospel, or whether he already knew their cold conservatism so well, he had no illusions about it, we have hardly the basis for a guess. We simply know he went on the Sabbath morning to his old home church, as had always been his custom, and was given the chance to lead their worship, by grace of "the ruler of the synagogue," the presiding scribe. It was their democratic custom thus to welcome a visiting rabbi. Perhaps Jesus had taught there acceptably before. Or possibly this invitation was due to the rumor that had preceeded him on his homeward journey, from other synagogues where he had been teaching. At all events, the stage was set for either a triumphant homecoming, or a grave personal disaster for the Carpenter who had broken with tradition by quitting his bench and old familiar tools.

In an atmosphere of expectant curiosity he arose, when the roll of Holy Writ was handed him by his old neighbor the scribe, and searched for the passage in the prophecies of Isaiah that was on his mind. There must have been a good deal of a sensation in

that synagogue when their neighbor the Carpenter read as the morning Scripture lesson:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to
the poor.

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."¹

The fact that he stopped exactly where he did, in the middle of a sentence, and declined to go on to speak of "the day of vengeance of our God," reveals something of the quality of his religion and the friendly temper of his mind. Then, as was the Hebrew custom, he sat down to expound the passage read; after handing to the attendant the precious roll of Scripture to be replaced in the holy place. After a moment of tense silence he amazed his old neighbors by saying of this messianic passage, "This day you have heard this scripture fulfilled."

At first they had all been under the spell of his gracious words and impressive manner, but a revulsion of feeling instantaneously followed this bold, calm assumption which seemed to them no less than blasphemy. A wave of petty neighborhood jealousy swept over them. It stampeded the congregation. The rising tide of bitter emotion was increased by his daringly straight preaching, the keenness of which shows that they had had differences before.

¹ Luke 4:18, 19; Isaiah 61:1, 2.

He was known to be a radical on some of the topics he touched on. Maybe for some time past he had been the village heretic. At all events they rose in a body and expelled him as a heretic from the church of his fathers, hustling him into the street, swiftly down the hillside to the steep precipice overlooking the valley of Esdraelon. Evidently impelled by the mob spirit, deeply enraged by what seemed to be his blasphemy, they proposed to inflict the punishment of death by stoning,² by hurling him headlong over the cliff to the cruel stones below. But at the critical moment their nerve failed them. Something majestic in his personality seemed to disarm them, so that they quailed before him, "and passing through the midst of them, he went his way." It was one of the most dramatic moments in the Nazarene's whole career.

This certainly must have been a tragic experience for Jesus. He knew intimately every man in that angry, lynching mob. Many of them had been his boyhood playmates and the comrades of his young manhood in daily work and social living, as well as in the worship of God, year after year, in that very synagogue. And now in an amazing fashion they had turned against him, and with a sudden virulence which brought hatred to the very verge of murder. Why did the Nazarenes persecute Jesus so remorselessly and expel him from church as a heretic? Could their bitter antagonism have been as sudden as it

² Leviticus 24:16.

seemed? Such a reversal of neighborly spirit certainly calls for explanation.

In the first place the mob spirit was doubtless aroused by the local scribes and rabbis because Jesus from their viewpoint was irregular. He was not a professional rabbi, yet he was presuming to be a religious teacher and leader. He had never had a theological education. He had never sat at the feet of the authoritative teachers of the Law, Hillel, Shammai, or Gamaliel. As a theologian, he seemed to them a rank outsider. "How does this man know learning, having never learned?" was the riddle they were fond of proposing. Its logic was unanswerable in a church which worshiped tradition and conformity. No wonder a self-taught man was a heretic; he could hardly help it. But he need not set himself up as a teacher. Thus ran on the complacently pious sages of Galilee.

Moreover he was not careful always to observe the Sabbath. This had probably long troubled his scrupulous neighbors. Of course he worshiped regularly in the synagogue, but he was just as likely to do a kind deed on the seventh day of the week as any other.* And if a poor neighbor's ass was inconsiderate enough to fall into a pit on the morning of a Sabbath, Jesus was not pious enough to wait till sundown before helping the poor beast out. He paid little attention to the traditions of the elders in the *Midrashim*. He seldom observed the fasts of the

* Mark 2:2, 3.

church,⁴ for he laughingly said he could not pretend to be unhappy when he was not; and even when he was sorrowful, it never added to his neighbor's happiness to advertise the fact.

Repeatedly he broke the rules of ceremonial ablutions, and seemed to take an unholy delight in washing his hands only when they needed washing.⁵ How shamelessly he had debated this matter with the loiterers at the village fountain! He seemed to be advocating a new kind of goodness, moral goodness, just as if he knew better than the elders and the educated scribes what was right to do! What a scandalous heretic! And to make a bad matter worse, he was not at all select in his choice of boon companions. Often he ate with the outcast publicans and sinners, who made no pretense of keeping the holy Law at all.⁶ What strange friends he had! All the queer folk of the village whom no one else befriended, and who simply didn't count at all. No wonder the carpenter shop of the House of Joseph never made much money. So the orthodox ran on!

All these peculiarities of Jesus' unconventional religion were heresies in the eyes of his neighbors that they had known about for years, but on that eventful Sabbath when he taught in their synagogue, it made them angry to think about them. What angered them the most, however, was to hear him extolling the Gentiles, that Phœnician woman of Zarephath whom Elijah befriended, and Naaman the

⁴ Mark 2:18.

⁵ Matthew 15:1-20.

⁶ Mark 2:15-17.

Syrian whom Elisha healed. He seemed to glory in the fact that he was not a one-hundred-per-cent Jew. He questioned whether the sons of Abraham were God's only chosen people. Perhaps God loved the Samaritans, or even the Sidonians! Surely this was heresy indeed, to try to prove that Jehovah was not simply the God of the Hebrews! That was more than they could stand, so out he went. The village scribes and Pharisees lost all patience with him. They could abide him and his heresies no longer, and in their orthodox wrath they cast him out. How pious it must have made them feel! So violent was their reaction against his revolutionary teaching, it almost cost him his life. At least it cost him all the influential friends he had left that day in Nazareth.

Two outstanding facts call for our special notice as we pass on from this violent scene in the Nazareth synagogue, which so cruelly hurt the tender heart of the Carpenter. The heresies for which they condemned him all had to do with his social ideals of religion. Religion to them was a matter of strict conformity to ritual rules, rites, and ceremonies, which he largely discounted. To him religion seemed to be a matter of social justice and righteousness, of human kindness and mercy. For such heresies they condemned him; they excommunicated him. For him to set himself up, their carpenter neighbor, as prophet of new heresies, seemed to them blasphemy. So it has always been when prophets of social righteousness have dared to face the priestly de-

fenders of any static faith with its frozen orthodoxy, its safe emphasis on remote transcendentalisms and petty externals. That day at Nazareth was the forerunner of the Spanish Inquisition, the fiery crosses of Smithfields in London, and all the heresy trials of Christian history, for Lowell was quite right:

"By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I
track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever, with the Cross that turns
not back;
And each mount of anguish numbers how each generation
learned
One new word of that grand Credo which in prophets'
hearts hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered, with his face to
heaven upturned." ⁷

However, in the religious experience of Jesus this highly significant event was not all tragedy, nor was the experience wasted. He had evidently intended to give an inaugural message to his old friends and neighbors, explaining to them why he was leaving the carpenter's bench to answer the call of more challenging service. In this great passage from the prophecy of Isaiah he found both his authority and his religious program. He had come back to them with the spiritual urge of a high calling from his Father-God and with a vision of a great adventure beckoning him on. It was to be a revolutionary adventure, this attempt to make religion

⁷ James Russell Lowell, *The Present Crisis*.

simply a way of life with spiritual power, the living of a friendly life.

With the spirit of deepest consecration and most earnest purpose he made his announcement. He proclaimed it with utter faith in the spiritual power of his Good News, and with unflinching intention to meet God's challenge to him to proclaim this Gospel to the poor, to open prison doors, and blind eyes, and prejudiced minds. But his jealous, narrow-minded neighbors grossly misunderstood him and shamefully mistreated him. As he turned his back on Nazareth that day and took his lonely way down the winding, rocky, mountain path to Capernaum by the lake, he stifled a great disappointment. With heavy heart he faced the stern necessity of matching the unexpectedly stubborn opposition of traditional orthodoxy with unflinching courage and even more determined purpose to do his Father's will.

IX

RELEASE FROM APOCALYPTIC PESSIMISM

JESUS was a true Jew of the first century, a man of his own race and time. The Gospels would hardly be credible, did they show him to be otherwise. We find him true to the great tradition of his people, loyal to their highest faith and hope; the ultimate victory of Jehovah, the coming Day of the Lord which the prophets had long proclaimed. The peculiar heritage of the Jews was their indomitable faith in an overruling God. Jehovah reigned, whoever might be on the throne. Unlike the gods of the Gentiles they thought of him as the universal King of Kings:

"The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." ¹

"Jehovah is a great God, and a great King above all gods." ²

"Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens,
And his kingdom ruleth over all." ³

Their faith in the rule of Jehovah was rudely and repeatedly shattered, as they became, in turn, the vassals of all their neighbors, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Syria, Rome. But the faith of

¹ Psalm 24:10.

² Psalm 95:3.

³ Psalm 103:19.

the prophets would not down. Jehovah was still king, whoever the tyrant on the throne, oppressing his people; and he would subdue the oppressors in his own time. His despairing people were reminded again and again by the prophets, "Behold Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." ⁴ And even in captivity their courage was sustained by such glorious messages as this:

"Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." ⁵

All the prophets in turn proclaimed a coming Day of the Lord, when Jehovah would rise in his might to restore his people Israel. Sometimes it was described as a day of wrath, of vengeance; sometimes a day of universal peace, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard, the kid, the calf, and the young lion shall lie down together; and a little child shall lead them." ⁶

But the vindication of Israel was very slow in coming. A vassal state most of their history, they gained but a brief and futile independence under the Maccabees, only to fall into the iron hands of Rome in 63 B.C. Yet these later generations were sustained by the ecstatic vision of the writer of the apocalypse of Daniel,

⁴ Isaiah 59:1.

⁵ Isaiah 60:1-3.

⁶ Isaiah 11:6-9.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold there came, with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." ⁷

Thus through the dark centuries the faith of this oppressed subject people was kept alive by daring prophecies and secret apocalypses regarding the Day of the Lord, the coming age of national salvation, and the Deliverer whom Jehovah would surely send to redeem his people.

We have already quoted, in Chapter VI, from the later literature between the Testaments, that had so much to say about the coming Son of Man and the kingdom of the heavens. Turn back to page 71 and glance again at those great passages from the book of Enoch and the Psalms of the Pharisees, which must have fired the adventurous spirit of the Youth of Galilee every time he heard or read them. That he must have shared these eschatological dreams of his afflicted people cannot be doubted. The fact that he was deeply influenced by them is clear from many of his teachings.

Considering the tragic history of the Jewish people it is not surprising that in spite of the optimism of the prophets they should become pessimistic in

⁷ Daniel 7:13, 14.

their outlook. Their world seemed to be ruled by the evil forces represented by the cruelty of Babylon Nineveh, and Persia, rather than by a just Jehovah. Their long contact with Persia had taught them the Zoroastrian view of the universe that seemed to fit in perfectly with their own racial experience. According to the Persian philosophy the present life is a battle between light and darkness, symbolizing the two opposing spiritual forces, Good and Evil. The Persian magi taught that the devil and his angels, who are doing so much evil in the world, will some day be destroyed by the good God. Then the dead will be raised, and a general judgment will lead to the punishment of the wicked and a happy life for the righteous.

As the discouraged Jews mourned over their national disasters, they came to believe more and more, with the Persians, that this world is under the sway of evil spirits. Paul shows the influence of the same belief, in his reference to "the prince of the powers of the air," of the "spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." ^a The ultimate victory must be on the side of Jehovah; but the day of deliverance seemed very far away, while Satan rules the present age. It is easy to see how radically this Persian dualism changed the earlier messianic hope of the Hebrews. It became less political, and more spiritual, cosmic, supernatural. Instead of mundane battles between human armies,

^a Ephesians 2:2.

the struggle was conceived of as supramundane, in the world of invisible spirits. The glory of the prophetic hope was dimmed, and gave way to apocalyptic pessimism. It offered little hope of betterment. In fact things were expected to go from bad to worse until the final cataclysm brought the Deliverer.

This eschatology was more Persian than Jewish, and had little in common with the Old Testament; but it strongly influenced the thought of the century before Christ, and of his own day. Even a casual reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus himself was much impressed by it. We see it especially in his dark prediction of coming tribulation and persecution for his followers, in Matthew 24, with its reference to wars and rumors of wars, and the final cataclysm when "after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." *

But neither Jesus' thought nor the thought of his day was dominated wholly, as some modern writers would have us believe, by this apocalyptic pessimism which hailed every fresh disaster as a sure sign of

* Matthew 24:29-31.

the coming of the final cataclysm. Some groups still hoped for a victory over Rome and a political restoration which would last for a thousand years before the coming of the new age with its final judgment. There were many who still retained the older messianic hope, quite unconquered by the Persian pessimism. All groups used rather freely the terms kingdom of God, and kingdom of the heavens, made popular by the later Scriptures of Daniel, Esdras, Baruch, Enoch, and the Psalms of Solomon.

Great differences of opinion existed as to the interpretation of the "Kingdom" and how it should be consummated, with varying elements of hope and pessimism. It all depended on one's faith in God, and the resulting faith in the speedy coming of his victory over the powers of darkness and the princes of the powers of the air. The liturgy of the synagogue contained frequent prayers for the speedy coming of the kingdom of God, according to Dr. G. F. Moore.¹⁰ The same authority quotes Rabbi Johanan as saying that "a prayer in which there is no mention of the kingdom is no prayer at all." We can readily understand, in view of these facts, that Jesus should make frequent reference in his teaching to God's reign, and the kingdom of heaven. From the very beginning it was his staple doctrine, his chief message to his people. His first recorded preaching, and likewise John the Baptist's, was on

¹⁰ G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. II, p. 373.

the challenging text, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ¹¹

But a man of Jesus' vigorous faith and spiritual intuition was not to be dominated long by the prevalent apocalyptic pessimism. He felt the strong pull of it, and used its language molds; but he was too sure of the nearness and love of his heavenly Father to be downed by it. His spiritual experience made God nearer and more real to him than the powers of evil. Though he seemed aware of such evil spirits, he feared them not, but seemed to possess the power to force them to do his will. ¹² And because he was sure of the superior power of God and his immanence, Jesus believed in the nearness of the Kingdom. It was not merely in the distant future. "Know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh." ¹³ "The kingdom of God is at hand." ¹⁴ He spoke of its consummation in the future; but he taught that its beginning was here and now.

So we discover that the fresh originality of Jesus' experience of God as his heavenly Father not only gave him a new start for religion for the world, hence a *new Gospel*; but its good news freed him from much of the pessimism of the prevailing eschatology. To be sure he continued to use apocalyptic language; especially as regards his own relationship to the Kingdom. But in two aspects this language was the language not of the Zoroastrian pessimists,

¹¹ Matthew 3:2; 4:17.

¹² Mark 1:23-27.

¹³ Luke 21:31.

¹⁴ Mark 1:15.

but of the Hebrew prophets. It was strongly dominated by the note of social righteousness; and gradually it disclosed him to be the Suffering Servant of Isaiah rather than the Deliverer of Enoch. His selection of the passage from Isaiah 61, when he made that inaugural address in the Nazareth synagogue, made both these points clear. He wished to free his Gospel at the start from the paralysis of apocalypticism which was such a deadly passive thing. He did not propose to sit around with tied hands and merely wait for the ultimate cataclysm. Enoch had no Gospel but the message of patient courage. Isaiah had a more active Gospel. Jesus chose Isaiah. He had a challenge to make the world better, more just, more happy. The thoroughgoing apocalypticists were utter pessimists. They did not wish human conditions to improve; for the worse they got the nearer was the Day of Deliverance. Jesus' Beatitudes alone, with their deep philosophy of human happiness and their superbly heroic note, are a refutation of both asceticism and pessimism.

So when writers of the Schweitzer school try to convince us that Jesus had no social message for the modern age, because his thought was "utterly conditioned by the eschatology of his day,"¹⁵ they are not very convincing to practical-minded Americans. The good Doctor Schweitzer we all admire; but he need an admixture of the practical wisdom of

¹⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, published by A. and C. Black, London. Cf. pp. 364, 369, 396 ff.

Kagawa to be convincing. Kagawa is a mystic, but like Jesus not a mere mystic. It is a pity that Schweitzer is so wholly mystical he gets all his personal religion from communion with the spirit of Christ, with no support whatever from the historical Jesus. Hence he is able to accept without any sense of loss almost the whole fabric of extreme German rationalistic criticism which has destroyed for them and for him most of the objective values of Jesus. Doctor Schweitzer seems to need no objective values. His essential facts are his mystical experiences. In this he is strikingly like Paul of the Damascus road.

Yet there stands upon the Synoptic record the wonderful social message of the Nazarene. What is to be done with it? Thoroughgoing mystics are not interested in it. But the Jesus of the Nazareth synagogue quite evidently was. Casually dismissing it as only "*interimsethik*," as our German friends do, does not dispose of it. The Golden Rule and the Law of Love still stand, as the eternal heart of the religion of Jesus. Had he been a mere eschatologist, he would have exalted *patience*, not love, as the fulfilling of the Law—and would have forgotten the prophets. In that case his Christianity would have produced another China in Europe and America—if in fact it had not stifled the adventurous spirit which found America!

The "*interimsethik*" theory still has to account for Jesus' social enthusiasm. Why does he actually have more to say about social righteousness, even such

mundane things as the right use of money, than about mystical experiences and prayer? Is this disproportion the fault of his biographers? Doubtless it could be answered, He anticipated the New Age would continue on this earth, after the millennium of the Deliverer; so he taught his followers the kind of human relations the New Age required. But even if it be granted that that was Jesus' expectation, the human scene still continues. The millennium is still but gradually developing, even though there has been great progress since Jesus' day. The fact is clear that out of Jesus' discovery of a Father-God he derived the Christian ideals of family life, as the norm for all human relations. And on the basis of true brotherliness he taught his friends how to live together in peace and mutual kindness. If brotherly kindness was necessary in the first century, even as "*interimsethik*," it is the Christian clue to social justice and Jesus' challenge to human conduct as long as humanity lives. We owe a debt to the modern interpreters of the ancient eschatology. They have thrown much new light on the mission and message of Jesus. But when they say he "was not interested in human conduct," and "has no social message," and "was not a teacher, but an imperious ruler,"¹⁶ they are flying in the face of half the pages in the Synoptic Gospels. A religion based on first-century eschatology has a meager message for a social age.

¹⁶ Schweitzer, *opus cit.*, p. 401.

X

THE GOSPEL OF THE REIGN OF GOD

As our last chapter might suggest, the term "kingdom of God" in Jesus' day meant about as many different things to different people as "socialist" or "liberal" mean today. Under the vigilant rule of Rome, to use the term at all was hazardous. That term "kingdom of God" and the title "Messiah" were politically taboo. Rome scented danger from afar. The Aramaic word for *kingdom* meant also *rule* or *dominion*, so the kingdom of God in its literal sense meant God's reign, or rule. This term, usually used in Luke, meant exactly the same as kingdom of heaven, which Matthew preferred. In those days punctilious Jews avoided referring to God by name. They often used the term heaven instead.¹

Kent calls attention to Jesus' avoidance of this term, the kingdom of God, in the early part of his ministry, according to the earliest of the Gospels.² He suggests that this may have been because the term had a fixed meaning, in the minds of many people, that Jesus did not fully accept. To the Zealots it meant the New Age which could be gained

¹ 1 Maccabees 2:21; 3:50, 60.

² See only Mark 1:14; 4:11, 26, 30 and 9:1.

only by rebellion against Rome. To many of the Pharisees it meant the New Age which could be gained only by God's miraculous intervention. Others, like probably the great teacher Hillel, thought of the coming rule of God as such a reign of justice as the prophets described, but to come by evolution not by catastrophe. It is likely that as Jesus' experience developed, he felt sympathy with each of these views in turn. As we have seen in that wilderness heart-searching of his, following the baptism, he fought his way through this great religious problem of his day.

The fact that he came forth from that wilderness seclusion with the message of the kingdom on his lips is doubly significant, for his proclamation was that the kingdom of God was *at hand*, and therefore people should repent.* This ranged him squarely with the prophets, alongside John the Baptist, instead of the apocalypsts who felt the remoteness of the New Age of the Kingdom. As he went on with his ministry he constantly called his message Good News; and the multitudes welcomed it as such. There was something about his preaching that was unusual, more or less original, and exceedingly grateful to the people. Their eager welcome can hardly be explained wholly on the score of his gracious personality, nor of his miracles. His Gospel of the Kingdom had something to do with his popularity. There was no particular good news in the summons

* Matthew 4:17.

to repentance. In both his case and John the Baptist's, the good news lay in the authoritative statement that the great Day of the Lord was near: "Get ready, for God's reign is nigh!" That was sensational news; and to them it was glorious good news.

In all probability most of Jesus' neighbors and contemporaries shared the apocalyptic pessimism of the Pharisees. They felt that their grievous lot under the heel of Rome was a hopeless one. They felt as utterly helpless as their ancestors were in the days when the Philistines had padlocked all the blacksmithies and there were only two swords in the land, the king's and his son's! And they had now no King Saul, Jonathan, nor David. They felt that only a miracle could save them. Jehovah still lived, they supposed; but he was very far away. Meanwhile they were under the sway of the Evil One. After they had suffered enough, God would send his Deliverer. How they all prayed for that Day of the Lord! Quite passively they felt there was nothing else they could do.

In such an atmosphere of passive resignation, we can imagine the sensation when a young man with hope in his face proclaimed the ringing message: "Get ready! the Day of the Lord is at hand! God's Reign is near!" No wonder the echo of his words traveled faster than he could, and from the whole countryside multitudes crowded about him, to find out if it could really be true. In such an expectant crowd Jesus found fresh opportunity for acts of

mercy. Their faith in him challenged the new powers he felt rising within him. His overflowing life gave them not only new hope but new strength and renewed health. The lame and the palsied learned to walk again. Deaf ears were unstopped, and blind eyes opened. These signs of the new life of the Kingdom convinced the multitude. God's reign was really here. Was not this strange Galilean the Deliverer? Had Jesus been foolish enough to let them, they would have made him king, trusting to God's supernatural intervention to overthrow Satan and his visible cohorts, the Roman legions.

But the Master had fought this all out and thought it through in those strenuous, lonely days in the wilderness. He was sure this was not God's will. His reign was spiritual, not political.

"And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here it is! or, There it is! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." (Margin: "in the midst of you.")

This plainly gave notice to the ecstatic dreamers among the Pharisees that he did not believe God's kingdom was coming by some sudden miracle which would make a great sensation. It was coming within people's hearts, and already was in their midst. "The presence of Jesus, filled with the inner sense of being borne powerfully on by the will of God to establish the New Order and surrounded by a group of dis-

⁴ Luke 17:20, 21.

ciples, constituted an uncataclysmic presence of the kingdom of God." ⁵

Repeatedly Jesus taught that the coming of the Kingdom was a process of growth, not cataclysm. It was growing unobtrusively from small beginnings, like the mustard tree from the tiniest of seeds, and like the natural growth of the wheat, from the buried grain to "the full corn in the ear." ⁶ Thus would his Kingdom outgrow that modest circle of a few followers. From heart to heart and life to life the living message of good will would be spread, leavening life with its influence, exactly as the yeast in the meal leavens the rising dough in the housewife's bread.⁷ The Kingdom was to be quietly sought as the greatest treasure in life: as a certain pearl merchant, finding a matchless pearl, sold all his possessions to purchase it.⁸

So frequently did Jesus describe his thought of the Kingdom in story and parable, it seems as though he intentionally avoided an actual definition; till we suddenly find his definition disguised in the simple prayer he taught his disciples: "*Thy Kingdom come: thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*" ⁹ There it is in simplest terms: God reigns, whenever, wherever his will is obeyed. It is almost a truism, it is so axiomatic. Take God's will as the rule of your life; and you are already in his kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is just the fair rule of God's good will on

⁵ E. I. Bosworth, *opus cit.*, p. 249.

⁶ Mark 4:28, 31.

⁷ Matthew 13:33.

⁸ Matthew 13:45.

⁹ Matthew 6:10.

earth. Why have long arguments about it? The kingdom of God is simply God's reign. And when God rules, good will reigns.

Jesus' supreme effort in trying to picture the life of the Kingdom was the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He always came closest to God when he thought of him in terms of Fatherhood. And he seemed best satisfied when finding the inner meaning of the Kingdom in terms of family life. It is on these lines that Dr. Richard L. Swain has given us a suggestive definition: "The kingdom of God is a loving, intelligent family, organized around the Father's good will, living in the universe of his home, and using the forces of nature as the instruments of his will."¹⁰ We doubtless come closest to Jesus' own intimate feeling on this question when we think of the Kingdom as the great cosmic family of the Father-God. It is the better world that is to be, the world of God's good will. It is a society of friendly workmen trying to live and work like brothers.

How early Jesus concluded that the Kingdom is essentially ethical and social, no one can be sure. It was probably when he finally decided that it was not political but spiritual. Even when he felt it to be eschatological, it still must involve God's justice. In an earlier chapter we found that he gathered many of his inspirations from the Old Testament prophets, and they had much to say to him about the social

¹⁰ R. L. Swain, *What and Where is God?* Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

righteousness which God requires. Surely the *quality* of the life of God's Kingdom is justice and good will, whatever and whenever that Kingdom may be. It could make no difference whether it be the Kingdom as dreamed by Hillel, or the Pharisees, or the Zealots; whether it came gradually or by sudden cataclysm; it could not be God's Kingdom unless its citizens were living in mutual good will.

If Jesus in the midst of his glorious dream of such a kingdom of heaven to be actually realized on this earth, needed any reminder of the difficulties involved before such a reign of God could be fully accomplished, he soon had frequent and ample warnings. Perhaps the first and rudest reminder came the day he gave that inaugural message in his old home church in Nazareth, and told his neighbors and friends how the work of the Kingdom looked to him. But this tragedy at Nazareth was only the beginning of a long conflict. The Pharisees had decided exactly how God's kingdom was to be consummated. God was to do it all himself, by supernatural intervention, in his own appointed time. Meanwhile they did not propose to have any amateur religionist of Galilee, a spiritual revolutionist and a carpenter at that, turning religion into mere sociology and trying to hasten the kingdom of God by preaching the social ethics of Amos and Micah! Let him study his Enoch and know better!

So the irrepressible conflict was on, between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, which continued till Judas, Pilate and Caiaphas together accomplished his

downfall. We cannot wonder that as the battle of bitter criticism and the secret campaign of character assassination went on, Jesus showed signs of occasional discouragement and the influence of the time-spirit. It seemed as though the Evil One himself were fighting against him. The powers of this world were mighty and relentless. Even the needy multitudes, for whom he had done so much, had deserted him; and his few friends were wavering. Verily the Day of the Lord was slow in coming. His teaching took on aspects of the current eschatology. He warned his followers of the imminent Cross, and of the coming tribulation and persecution for them all.¹¹ Yet in an ecstatic moment he promised the disciples that in the future day of victory, "in the regeneration," when the Son of Man should sit on his glorious throne, they also should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.¹² His parables became more and more vivid and ominous, especially the one about Dives and Lazarus,¹³ and his apocalyptic picture of the Final Judgment.¹⁴

But as it became more and more evident that the issue of the coming Kingdom would not be settled in his lifetime, the Master began to speak of his return. Visions of the mystic *Parousia* he shared with his intimate circle. The secret of his messiahship he revealed to them. It was probably Judas' betrayal of this secret, as Schweitzer suggests, which earned for

¹¹ Matthew 24, entire.

¹² Matthew 19:28.

¹³ Luke 16:19-31.

¹⁴ Matthew 25:31-46.

him his miserable ducats. With growing impressiveness and portent Jesus spoke of himself, his mission, and his mysterious return. One day in this prophetic mood he said to his friends, "Verily there are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."¹⁵ Then followed the ecstatic experience of the transfiguration,¹⁶ only six days later, described by Mark in the same chapter. Three of them saw that night the radiant glory of the Son of Man, in the manifest presence of God. To them it was an apocalyptic event of the highest order. It was a sudden breaking forth of the glory of the New Age for which they had long prayed. It gave them unprecedented sense of the dignity of their Lord. The indelible memory of it made them sure he would again come "on the clouds of heaven" as they had seen him that night on the mountain. He himself spoke with assurance of his return, but said plainly, "of that day and hour no one knoweth, not even the Son, but the Father."¹⁷ Repeatedly after his death they were certain that they saw him. He returned to talk with them. In his resurrection, his conquest of death, they founded their unshakeable faith in immortality.

Thus we find in the initial unfolding of the messianic Kingdom, unmistakable aspects of an eschatological nature. They chiefly related to the person of the Christ, and the continuance of his leader-

¹⁵ Mark 9:1.

¹⁶ Mark 9:2-8.

¹⁷ Matthew 24:36.

ship of the great movement he had projected into human history. They did not affect the basic religious and ethical principles which Jesus had discovered to be absolutely fundamental, as the quality of life in any Reign of God. God's eternal Fatherhood fastened upon humanity forever the glory of sonship to God and obligation of mutual brotherliness. On this foundation Jesus based his cosmic faith that God's Kingdom would ultimately come; that the Father's will would gradually be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is the mightiest faith in mortal history. Its consummation is the task of the ages, the ultimate quest of the living God himself. It involved the whole upward climb of human society, evolving out of pagan selfishness into Christian altruism and a civilized world of victorious good will. To quote the calmly assuring words of Dean Bosworth:

"The Kingdom was to be a world civilization in which honesty and friendliness in personal life and social institutions would be made universal and secure, a civilization in which all men as sons of God, the heavenly Father, would work together in a powerful, true and faithful brotherhood at all the varied tasks to be set for them by the unfolding will of God." ¹⁸

As the nineteen centuries since the Galilean hope have been making Christian history, it has become evident that neither the ethical Prophets nor the Apocalypsts were wholly right. The on-coming strides of the democracy of God have been by no

¹⁸ E. I. Bosworth, *opus cit.*, p. 244. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

means rhythmic and steady. There has been plenty of cataclysm to appease the eschatologists; ample revolution to satisfy the zealots. But the providence of God has interwoven it all into the marvelous fabric of life. In the grand strategy of social evolution God has been able to use catastrophe and revolution, together with the daily toil of quiet men of peace, as even the wrath of men has been made to work his will. Progress is the will of God. Progress is recorded in the ongoing victory of Christ's men of good will.

Needless to say, the final victory is far ahead of us; but not too far for faith. Kingdom faith is too imperial to conceive of the ultimate failure of Love, for *Love is God*. This was the great Gospel of Jesus, as it grew in his unique experience. The quest of the rest of this book is to discover, if we can, the great resources Jesus found, out of which to realize his own religion and project it into the future. We shall seek to understand his few original and revolutionary principles, and their meaning for our age. It is inevitably a study of clashing ideals, and the inner core of all human struggle and warfare. One of our modern seers¹⁹ has described the kingdom of God as the biggest fight for which brave men ever enlisted, and the greatest game that ever was played! He admits the odds are always against us. It is as if a lone little eleven on the gridiron in a mighty stadium should see the whole crowd swarming down

¹⁹ Walter Rauschenbusch, in *Christianizing the Social Order*.

upon the field and lining up against them. Yet we know in our souls that we are bound to win, for God is playing with our beleaguered eleven, and God has unusual staying powers. All who have ever fought for the kingdom of God know that there is a strange joy in it. The memory of one good fight for freedom or justice gives a thrilling sense of worth for a lifetime. Rauschenbusch claims that there is even a grim sense of humor as you watch the crowd rolling down on you and you wait to be trampled upon! Yes, the Reign of God calls forth the spirit of heroic struggle for a Cause. It demands the finest temper of true sportsmanship. The Youth of Galilee challenges us all to the great adventure of history, the building of a kinder world.

PART II
REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS



XI

HOW MUCH IS A HUMAN LIFE WORTH?

It is clear that the radical purpose of Jesus was not to pass on an old religion, but to create a new world. Whether the new world of his vision and hopes was to be ultimately a universal family of God's good will, or merely a triumphant Israel in a collapsing world, the moral quality of its human living, in Jesus' vision of the Ought-to-be, must be the same. Any "*interimsethik*" he might approve for a year or so must accord with his ideals of what is eternally right. Jesus would approve no makeshift ethics. Hence the argument that whatever the social ethics of Jesus, he never intended them for a distant age, but only for the brief remaining span of life in Israel, is an argument that falls flat. His ethical ideals would be the same in either case. So even if one should hold the "*interimsethik*" theory, it need not vitiate the importance of one's studying the social ideals of Jesus today. The clarity of Jesus' insight into truth, the will of God, and the needs of man, made him a seer of spiritual and moral values who still remains unmatched in human history. His fundamental spirit, his ideals for the broad lines of human relations, and his general attitude toward life

and personality are timeless and universal, hence of perennial value.

The high adventure of Sonship to God, on which Jesus had embarked, led him to challenge the life and thought of his age in many ways. Nothing in his teaching is more revolutionary than his attitude toward personality. No wonder his critics called him a revolutionist. He flatly challenged all previous ideas as to the value of human life. We are told in John 7:48 that one of the Pharisees said, "Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the Law are accursed." That has always been the typical aristocratic attitude toward the "lower classes," whether the untouchables of India, the coolies of China, the negroes of America, or the slaves of Moslem lands. A modern American echo of this heartless note was heard fifty years ago when a famous railway president remarked explosively, "The public be damned!" Those were his sentiments when a certain new policy of his railroad was criticized as likely to displease the public.

The keenest test of any civilization is the valuation it puts upon human life. Doubtless from the beginning life has been cheaper than property. Even in the most highly civilized of ancient lands, Greece or Rome, from two-thirds to three-fourths of the population were slaves. All public works were built by slave labor. Augustus found Rome brick and left it marble; but it was the slaves of Rome that built

those marble palaces and temples. The massive pyramids of Gizeh and the huge temple of Karnak, largest in all history, tell a tragic story of Egyptian slavery. The pyramids are a monument not only to a Pharaoh and his royal spouse but also to thousands of slaves sacrificed indubitably in such perilous labor. Safety appliances to protect the laborer are all products of the Christian era. The inclined plane up which those massive stones were laboriously rolled was death's own right of way. The slightest carelessness, and the stone became a ten-ton toboggan; and crash went twenty slaves. But who cared if only the precious stone was saved? Such was the heartlessness of ancient Egypt. Even yet its vast ruins breathe the utter hardness of its cruel culture. Rome was but little kinder. In its cold-blooded, calculating world-conquest a slave was but a cipher, and life was of less consequence than property.

"What strange awakening shape is this—
What is his breed, his genesis?
Peer into the past: from every age
His visage stares in silent rage.
Down the long centuries he came. . .
Who is he? Ask the sands his name.

Behold, he is the Toiling Man,
Unresting since the world began.
What blind road has he come to this—
Out of what darkness, what abyss?
Grinding grim blocks in ages gone,
His groans gave Greece the Parthenon:

Out of the deeps of his despair,
 The Colosseum whirled in air.
 Back somewhere in the night of years,
 The bricks of Babel felt his tears.
 Back in the ages, stooped with loads,
 Silent to curses and to goads,
 With panting mouth and sullen lids,
 He piled the monstrous Pyramids.
 Yea, staggering under stripes and scars,
 He heaved huge Cheops to the stars.
 The Memphian Sphinxes in their day
 Saw him go by as still as they.
 And on all roads he ever trod
 His silence was his cry to God."¹

It was into such a world that the kindly revolutionist of Galilee was born. On the winding caravan trails of his experience traffic accidents were rare, but it was during his impressionable early teens that the iron heel of Roman vengeance stamped out rebellious Sephoris, a thriving town but six miles northwest of Nazareth, because it joined Judas the Galilean's rebellion against Rome. It was totally ruined and its people sold into slavery, all that escaped the Roman cross. Against such a background we feel the smoldering passion in Jesus' protest:

"Which of you, if he had but a single sheep and that sheep fell into a pit on the Sabbath, would not take hold and rescue it? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!"²

¹ Edwin Markham, "The Toiler," from *Poems of Justice*, compiled by T. C. Clark, and published by permission of the author.

² Matthew 12:11-.

In those pastoral days a sheep was the standard of property values. Wealth was reckoned in terms of flocks and herds. Barter was common and coins were rare. (Jesus' clear teaching in the above reference was his revolutionary protest that life, human life, is worth more than property. A contemporary scribe would have quibbled about it. It would depend on whose life was involved, and what property.) If you had in mind some rich Sadducee, then both his life and property were of more value than other men's lives, if they were men of low degree. Has not this always been the aristocrat's standard of values? Why go to the expense of a modern elevator in a West Virginia coal mine when another carload of white Russians or "Bohunks" will quickly replace the human casualties, without imperiling dividends? At all costs we must maintain dividends. And why spend the corporation's cash protecting the factory hands in a St. Louis shoe factory by new guards at the elevator wells and at the heavy jaws of blind machines? Far better spend that money installing a sprinkler system to reduce the fire-hazard, for that protects the property!

The quibblers who discard Jesus' social teachings as irrelevant to the modern age, because he never heard of elevator wells and sprinkler systems or even shoe factories, are more rabbinical than Christian. (We can imagine Christ's retort to their quibbling: "What matters it whence the peril, or how human life is slain, or in what form the property is

held, *is not a man of more value than a sheep?*" And there is a glorious democracy in that word of his, "A MAN"—any man, any person, regardless of race, sex, sect, or color. It suggests Burns' noble line: "A man's a man for a' that."

Jesus' teaching of the preciousness of a single human soul was a basic principle in his religion. It comes out in this most familiar question, "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"^{*} A man's life is worth more than all the world's possessions, at least to himself, and to all who love him. Yet countless people are still as reckless of their own lives as others are for them. Failure to respect personality, whether of ourselves or others, is the basic social sin, and the cause of most crimes of social injustice. No prophet of the past had taught how fundamental this principle is until the keen discernment of Jesus discovered it. So basic does this original contribution of Jesus seem to him, Doctor Fosdick says:

"Were one to select the special contribution which Jesus of Nazareth himself has made and is making to man's thought, one could do no better than to call him the champion of personality. . . . Whether one is really a Christian or not depends on whether one accepts or rejects Jesus' attitude toward personality." "So thoroughly does Dr. George A. Coe agree with this estimate, he sums up all the social ideals

^{*} Matthew 16:26.

[†] H. E. Fosdick, *As I See Religion*, published by Harper and Brothers, and quoted with their permission.

of Jesus under this one principle as a sufficient guide in the reconstructive process in Christian education.⁶ In his superlative praise of this principle he goes further than the present writer can, when he says that loyalty to it is even more important than loyalty to Christ himself: "The loyalty of the Christian, accordingly, is not loyalty to one person, even Jesus, but to persons."⁷ The present writer finds it nearer the truth to say: We are loyal to Jesus only when we are loyal to personality, when we treat all souls as of infinite worth.

The uniqueness of this great principle of Jesus seemed to his contemporaries even more revolutionary when they watched him to see if he really meant it. He surely did, for they found him befriending all sorts of people, any one whom he thought he could help—beggars, hated tax-gatherers, Samaritans, and every other sort of social outcast. He ostracized no person, race, or class. He accepted dinner invitations even from publicans and sinners. As a housebuilder probably one of his specialties was renovizing decrepit old cottages that were rotting at the sills and collapsing in the roof, crumbling away from sheer neglect. And when this work of home redemption reminded him of the crumbling characters of some of his neighbors, he set about redeeming the human wrecks also. Of course his queer taste in choosing

⁶ G. A. Coe, *What is Christian Education?* p. 296. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted with their permission.

⁷ *Opus cit.*, p. 182. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted by permission.

friends was laughed at by the cynics. His quiet explanation was, "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."

Jesus carried his doctrine of the value of the individual even so far as to include the leper, the insane, the perishing. In a day when most people regarded insanity and other misfortunes as caused by evil spirits as well as the discipline of Jehovah for their sins, so that even the relatives of the poor wretches would drive them from their own homes and compel them to live in caves or find refuge in the wilderness, the boundless pity of Jesus must have caused vast surprise. His humaneness reached its climax that day when in overflowing sympathy he actually touched a leper, and one in the last stages of the dread disease at that. How it must have thrilled the poor wretch! For many a day no human hand had touched him. The law of the priests forbade it; but what cared Jesus for that? By touching the man he proved his love for him; and love won the man's heart and saved his soul. Was not even a leper worth saving? Was he not a child of God's love?

Ah! that was just it. Jesus had learned all this from his heavenly Father. It all came from his thought of God as Father. Whether or not we have Christ's own words in the fourth Gospel, the message of John 3:16 is at the heart of his religion: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might

not perish, but have everlasting life." The family concept of religion required belief in God's impartial love for all his perishing children. That divine love makes sacred and precious forever every man's soul. Jesus' most tender and beautiful teachings revealed this thought of God. What effect his story of the One Hundredth Sheep had upon the Pharisees was not reported, but it has touched the heart of the world. How persistently that tireless shepherd searched the moor until he found his wandering sheep! And how happy he was when he brought the helpless, tired creature home on his shoulders! So happy he had to share his joy with all his friends. Such is the persistent love of the Father-God for the penitent sinner who has wandered far. Again we see it at the end of the matchless story of the Prodigal, as the Father explains to his older son:

"You, my son, are always with me, and everything that is mine is yours. But we were bound to make merry and be glad, for this brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life again. He was lost, but is found." ⁷

(Very plainly the religion of Jesus stands for the priceless worth of every human soul, for reverence for personality, because of the fact of a Father-God and his love for every last one of his children. This is, or ought to be, Christianity. Where it is not, men are false to the faith of Jesus. The Seer of Galilee saw clearly enough to know that there never can be a kingdom of God's good will, a universal family,

⁷ Luke 15:31. (Author's translation.)

until the preëminence of personal values is widely and consistently recognized. But was this any truer in his day than in ours? Is it an unwarranted use of "the Jesus stereotype" to insist on this basic principle which originated with him and is still all-important?

Has the time arrived when the supremacy of the machine is preferable to the supremacy of the spiritual? Have the mechanical gifts of creature comforts, electrified pleasures, and commercialized joys made the *reign of things* so perfect a heaven that we no longer need to reverence personality? When that sordid time comes the human race will no longer be "a little lower than the angels," but machine-puppets doomed to extinction. A discerning writer has suggested, "To denude God of personality seems to denude ourselves of personality." Perhaps this emphasis of Jesus is all the more needed in our mechanistic age. Has the expanding power of science really made human life safer and more precious than a century ago? Far from it. The death rate is lower in the jungle than on Main Street or any of our rural super-highways. How much is a human life worth? The Master would say, Surely it is worth more than pleasure. Yet on the highways of this speed-mad country, in the year 1930, no less than 32,500 people were killed by the automobile, that deadliest instrument of peace, not counting the hundreds of thousands who were injured. And the number rose in 1931 to 34,400 who lost their lives, including many thousands of children; though that

was a depression year when many motors were arrested by poverty. No wonder this motor-peril has recently been called "the major horror of history," though many of us are criminally complacent about it.

We all know in our hearts that Jesus was right. Personality is the most precious thing in the world, and no culture can last that denies it. Where wealth, power, pleasure, avarice, or any man-made machine bears down on human life and crushes it, the organized power of Christian love must assert this principle of Jesus and somehow work out a remedy. We have made steam travel, on both railways and the ocean, amazingly safe in recent years. We have largely reduced industrial accidents by the use of safety appliances in mills and factories, invented by Christian ingenuity. Laws enacted by a Christian social conscience have put an end to such atrocities as "phossy jaw," that occupational disease which lasted as long as phosphorus matches were made. Compulsory fire-escapes have saved countless lives in the last decade's fires. Health inspection in schools, pure-food inspection, milk inspection are types of the Christian efficiency which has helped to reduce, by more than one-half, the death rate in all our cities. In countless ways we have made commendable progress in protecting human life. In the minds of innumerable Christian business men Christ's estimate does prevail: Life is worth more than dividends, and has been increasingly protected at great

expense. Since the evil day of universal slavery and forced labor, the day when women and children had no rights but were wholly at the mercy of men, and the day when every government was tyranny, the spirit of the kindly Christ has made great progress in the world. But with war's deadly scourge still threatening, in spite of the Pact of Paris, who can claim his victory is won?

Some recent writers are claiming that no one can say what a Christian State would be today, because we are not sure enough of Jesus' actual teachings. Yet if we knew nothing else about his social teachings than this fundamental principle of the infinite worth of persons, the faith of his followers should be able to construct a Christian society. This principle is a key to all his social ideals. It is a pregnant, creative principle, granting which, many other Christian attitudes and ideals must follow as a matter of course.

Consequently many of the remaining chapters of this book are inevitable corollaries of the present chapter. Kindness, social justice, social righteousness, neighborliness, service, and the Golden Rule itself, are all natural outcomes of the family ideal of religion in which the life of every child is infinitely precious in the sight of a Father-God. The idea seems eminently harmless; but there is dynamite in it! It spelt revolution in Jesus' own day, and it means revolution still, for the same reason. The world is still in large measure selfish, therefore care-

less of the rights of others. Even a nominally Christian country is too blindly nationalistic and its industrial system too grasping to put first and foremost, as Jesus did, before property, profits, and national pride and ambition, the fundamental rights of persons.

In our own day, if we should be absolutely loyal to this key-principle of Jesus, what would happen to dealing in futures on the grain market? What would become of buying stock on margins? What would be done about stock-watering, drug-adulterating, slum tenement-renting, railroad grade-crossings, salacious magazines and novels, indecent movie films, sweat-shop exploiting? And what about such major atrocities as war and alcohol, which have always taken such terrible toll of human life? In fact, all the unethical survivals and unsettled problems of a half-Christian society stand abashed before the ringing challenge of the Nazarene to hold a single human life as infinitely precious.

XII

REVOLUTIONARY STANDARDS OF HAPPINESS

ANOTHER important point at which Jesus attacked the popular ideals of his day was their appraisal of happiness. Happiness is one of the major goals of life, an inherent human right, a universal objective, for every one wants to be happy. But what has it to do with religion? Jesus seems to have felt it extremely important for people to have right ideals of happiness, because of their effect upon religious attitudes and character. And as these attitudes and ideals loomed so large in Jesus' own religion, this question of what it does mean to be really happy was one which greatly concerned him.

He was distressed by the prevalent sadness in his mountain village. God meant people to be happy; what made them so cheerless and anxious? Why was their quest for happiness so commonly a failure? To be sure it was a gloomy age, this Roman captivity, as disheartening as the days in Babylon. But must happiness depend upon external conditions? Surely a loving God would never have put hunger for it in every heart, if only the rich and highly fortunate could ever be happy. There must be another road, a

more excellent way. Perhaps the pathway to peace was in a man's own heart. The Carpenter himself had troubles enough—with his niggardly customers, his unsympathetic brothers who thought him a visionary, and his neighbors who thought him a radical and a heretic. Yet he persistently shut his ears to their quarrels and complaints which drowned out the song of the thrush. They could not silence the song in his heart. After all, life was beautiful because God was love. So he listened to his own singing thoughts, and beheld his own inspiring visions, till the scolding at the shop door ceased. He soon found that God gave him inner resources, an inexhaustible spring, deep in the haven of his heart. And the name of that haven was Peace.

It is not at all strange that we find the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. If it was a sermon, the Beatitudes served beautifully as a text. Doubtless those three chapters, perhaps the most compact and significant in all literature, were compiled by the writer of the Gospel, just as he grouped his other materials throughout his book. Luke scatters these teachings of the Sermon on the Mount here and there through twelve of his twenty-four chapters. Yet these nine Beatitudes of Jesus form a highly appropriate introduction to his teachings. Like a lovely *motif* in a great sonata, these challenging Blessed of Jesus must have recurred frequently in his informal preaching to the poor discouraged multitudes of Galilee. The very drabness

of their meager lives suggested the need of such a refrain. His conception of his Gospel, and of his function as a bearer of Good News, revealed his consuming desire to increase human happiness, and to share with the world his peace.

But here again this gentle apostle of love found himself doomed to assume the rôle of revolutionist. His ideals of what joy really is, and what the road to happiness must be, were amazingly different from the world's prevailing notions. So they perplexed the many, greatly comforted the few, and caused his cynical critics to smile with knowing glances and touch their fingers to their foreheads as if to say, "Poor visionary, he is either insane or a wild revolutionist. Probably both." Not that there was anything unusual in the Palestinian quest for happiness. Their prevailing ideas as to who in the world is happy were quite identical with the usual commonplace, "common-sense" notions that have everywhere led the superficial and the selfish on the easy false trails of life.

Still surprisingly persistent are the traditional ideas of how to be happy. People may still be classified by their strangely different notions about having a good time. Their quest for it is quite revealing. Some find it best in creative work; others only in their play. Some are happiest when quietly thoughtful; many others when hectic and uproarious. Some seek happiness in commercialized amusements; others in the strenuous competitions of life. Some

seek it in crowds; others in isolation. Some seek it in religion; others in drugs and drunkenness. There's no accounting for taste in this elemental human hunger for the joy of living. But certain it is, the ideals of Jesus about happiness were revolutionary in his own generation; and, though they have been accepted by millions as convincingly true, to the world they are revolutionary still. The fundamental difference is, Jesus discovered, and real Christians agree, that happiness depends on character and the spiritual resources of the inner life; while the selfish world in general seeks it in the exploiting of mere externals. Notice the striking contrasts in detail that follow from such divergent premises:

THE WORLD SAYS:

Happy are the proud and the rich.
Happy are they who are free from sorrow.
Happy are the self-assertive and ambitious.
Happy are the "liberals" with no Puritan conscience.
Happy are the "hard-boiled" realists.
Happy are the voluptuaries of pleasure.
Happy are the heroes of war and the field of honor.
Happy are the prudent who avoid persecution.
Happy are they who escape slander, insults, and ridicule.

BUT JESUS SAYS:

Happy are the humble, the poor in spirit.
Happy are the mourners, the penitent.
Happy are the unassuming, the self-controlled.
Happy are they who long earnestly for goodness.
Happy are the kind and merciful.

Happy are the pure-minded.

Happy are the peacemakers.

Happy are the martyrs to a great cause.

Happy are you who bear insults and slanders because you are Christians.

When Jesus began to teach those sad, discontented Galileans his new ideals of how to be happy, it must have been a welcome message. They discovered they need not covet any longer the riches of the powerful, for riches and power are not needed to make people happy. They were surprised and comforted to find that they could be happy with whatever they had. Christ gave their humble souls the secret of contentment, the greatest possession of all.

Inspection reveals the fact that Jesus graded his nine Beattitudes in three groups. We discover there are three degrees in joyous human living; positive happiness, comparative joy, and superlative bliss. Together they unfold the secrets of a growing Christian character. The first four deal with the ideals of personal goodness which produce happiness in the positive degree. The next three Blesseds describe the ideals of social justice which test and broaden character, whose reward is the comparative degree of deepening joy. And the last two exalt the superlative blessedness which rewards the martyr's supreme loyalty. This is the Christian's ascent of joy.

The first group of four Beatitudes have to do with the Christian's inner life and the road to peace and happiness therein. He must lay aside all spiritual

pride and self-assurance, and become humble and teachable. Only then can he learn to be childlike and grow in the graces of the Christian spirit. He must repent of his sins with an honest sorrow or he will never have the strength to quit them, nor the joy of true liberty. If he would inherit happiness he must be truly meek, that is, self-controlled under provocation; gentle and unassuming, not easily provoked. And his longing for goodness, his love for doing right, must become such a consuming hunger that he cannot be happy otherwise.

It was a wise seer who discovered that the spiritually proud, like those self-satisfied Pharisees, are rather certain never to grow better. They are too complacent already to make further effort. They have attained their low ideals and have no further goal of nobler goodness to strive for. Yet their boastful piety is a counterfeit which is often apparent. How can they be happy till some bitter experience makes them poor in spirit and they become humbly penitent? The least popular Beatitude is the third, which exalts meekness. It has often been ridiculed by the cynical as quite preposterous. Yet we see the shining truth within it when we witness the failure of the self-assertive and the pushful, and the victory of quiet, modest, well-poised self-control. The fact is, the world loves the latter, but the pushful have few friends. Surely the meek do inherit the world's friendship; nor do the pushful get all the world's gold. And such as they get buys little happi-

ness, for the most precious things in life are out of the reach of money.

The next three Beatitudes bear witness to the fact that the religion of Jesus demands social justice. It never stops with personal goodness. His good news for a better world is a gospel of kindness. He was calling for the union of all who love for the saving of all who suffer. In large measure the world's happiness depends on the triumph of this Beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Supremely the organized religion of Jesus is an active campaign of kindness. Christ cannot triumph in the world until every kind of injustice gives way to kindness and the Golden Rule.

But the happy people are also the pure-minded. The foul imagination soon leads to soul-blindness and slavery to the lower passions. It is the pure in heart who see God, his human likeness in the characters of men. Thus they reverence the persons of others and are kept from wronging them. Impurity and every other social sin are attacks upon the rights of others that seemed to Jesus like insults to the Father of us all. A great black chapter in human history is challenged by this noble ideal of Jesus and a new standard set in the social history of the race. That it was an impossible standard was doubtless the verdict of most of his first-century hearers; yet the Christian world is now convinced that there is happiness in human social relations only by the Jesus' way of social purity.

It seemed high praise to the humble peacemakers of the Galilean villages to rank them with the blessed. The referees in family quarrels, the cool heads who came between the angry disputants, only to be a target for blows from both antagonists, usually found a quiet satisfaction their sole reward. Yet Jesus now canonizes them as saints in his great temple of happiness. So certain was he that fighting or quarreling is always the worst way to settle any question, and peace the only hope for a happy world, he ranks the peacemaker high in this list of the blessed and assures him the title of Child of God. Since those days of almost continuous warfare between rival nations, human history has traveled far. To be sure we have had ever "bigger and better wars"! But we also have at last a world conscience which strongly condemns war. At last war has been actually *outlawed* by the Pact of Paris. To what extent is this happy way-mark of human progress due to the fact that a Galilean revolutionary long ago initiated the world's peace movement by saying "Blessed are the peacemakers?"

Jesus' climax of happiness comes under his ideals of service and sacrifice. Joy in the superlative degree comes only to those who serve and sacrifice for others. He forecasts here the glory of martyrdom and the joy of the Cross. We should like to know how early in his career he first announced these two heroic Beatitudes. It must have been after he himself had passed through the fire of ridicule and insult and

saw before him the irrepressible conflict which must end for him at the Cross. Yet he was ready to say that in persecution for the Cause of righteousness there is supreme joy. The history of Christian martyrdom has proved him right.

The nine Beatitudes of Jesus not only gave the world a philosophy of happiness which makes a spectrum of the joyous life as beautiful as it was revolutionary. They also describe the necessary elements in a Christian character. He taught that true happiness depended upon true character, and we shall find that the prescriptions for the useful life, the happy life, and the Christian life are essentially the same. So we find these compact crystallizations of eternal truth which the world calls the Beatitudes furnish a simple but rather inclusive outline of the ideal personal life as Jesus conceived it, the life that he himself purposed to live.

The life that is Christian is normally a life of deep and lasting happiness. To appreciate fully its privilege we need to visualize in contrast the opposites to Jesus' Beatitudes:

Woe to the spiritually proud: for theirs is the fate of the lonely.

Woe to the impenitent: for they shall never know forgiveness.

Woe to the self-assertive: for they shall have few friends.

Woe to the indifferent: for they miss the real joy of living.

Woe to the cruel, the hard-hearted: for they deserve no mercy.

Woe to the foul imagination: soul-blindness is its portion.
Woe to the war-makers: for they shall be called hell's children.

Woe to the Cross-shirkers: for its triumph can never be theirs.

Woe to the pampered and flattered: theirs the fate of the false, a lost heaven.

XIII

THE SPIRITUAL MIGHT OF THE CHILDLIKE

JESUS' revolution in religion was a genuine youth movement. In his own heart was the spirit of eternal youth, in spite of all the blind hazards he met, and the obstacles thrown in his path by the cynical and prematurely old. Evidently he won very little support for his enterprise from conservative age or prudent maturity. He did succeed in challenging a group of young Galileans to follow him and unite their fortunes with his, because they had enthusiasm and idealism to appeal to, which most of their seniors lacked. He found that the average adult had lost his zest for life, and had become disillusioned. Most of the village solons of Nazareth, who sat around the fountain and criticized the religion of the Carpenter, had characters as gnarled and knotted as their hands. They were creatures of habits and prejudices. They were full of crochets and idiosyncrasies. No wonder the more Jesus saw of grizzled old weatherbeaten fishermen like Zebedee of Bethsaida, the more he loved unspoiled children.

On the other hand the children of the village flocked to the Carpenter. He was a wonderful story-

teller, and he liked and understood children. So it is not strange that they loved him. He liked to watch them at their games, and they liked to watch him at his work; so that made a real partnership. In all ages children have loved the soft white curls that peel off the carpenter's plane. Nazareth was no exception. But when the plane was laid aside and a dreamy look came into the Carpenter's deep eyes, which signaled the children that he had just thought a beautiful story and was living in the world of fancy for the moment, the little ones crept into his arms again, trustfully, expectantly. And he found the children always understood. Strange, but the great simple truths which the old wiseacres at the fountain scoffed at, the children could appreciate. And one day some one overheard him quietly saying: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."¹

One of the tragedies of life to him was the fact that children grew old so quickly. It seemed to be a contagious disease, and the most prevalent of all. There was a tradition that even Zebedee was long ago the most likeable boy in the village, as eager, winsome, and supple-minded as his young son John, whom Jesus found so splendidly responsive and enthusiastic. Just what had happened to Zebedee? What had the years of hard work done to him? Why had he thought his two sons crazy when they left

¹ Matthew 11:25.

their fishing boats and nets at the call of the Nazarene? Why had his dull, lack-luster eyes silently rebuked the young man of Nazareth for interfering with his business? To explain to him the hopes and plans of this youth movement was like talking to a rock. There was nothing in him to appeal to, no courage, no adventurous faith, no belief in human nature, no feeling for the beauty of life, the love of God or the joy of living. His visions were dead. His ideals were dead. What a man! He was impossible. Even the spirit of God could not use such utterly intractable material for the building of a better world. It was such people who were delaying the coming of the Kingdom. Why? Simply because the spirit of a child had died within them. They had proved false to their own youth.

So it came to pass that one day Jesus put up over the entrance to his Kingdom the strangest of all notices: No admittance except to the childlike. It happened in Capernaum by the lake. His friends were disputing over that theological riddle, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?"

"And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." ²

² Matthew 18:2-5.

How incredible this must have sounded to the religious leaders of his day! Not since the world began had sane man ever put such an estimate on children. The wise and highly honored had always been the aged, the experienced. Was this upstart teacher denying the value of experience and discounting all in authority? What a foolish revolutionist! With a shrug and a sneer they gathered up their academic robes and passed on, thanking God for superior wisdom.

The adult world ever since has been trying to understand the strange preference of Jesus for children and the childlike. Surely it was not due to the fact that so many grown folks are eccentric, prosy, and uninteresting, with odd streaks and peculiarities. Nor was it caused by any failure on the part of the Master to sympathize with such industrial derelicts as Zebedee, worn out by arduous labor and bearing the marks thereof in deep-furrowed faces, twisted hands, and stiff, rheumatic joints. Surely no one could accuse the Nazarene of mere surface judgment, much less of lack of sympathy. His compassion for pitiful old men and women needed no testimony. He demonstrated it every day of his public ministry and doubtless much earlier. His high valuation of the child mind was a born teacher's discovery. When one teaches naturally, children with their plastic, teachable minds, learn miraculously. With the swiftness of blotting-paper they absorb impressions; but to make a dent on some of the flinty minds

of stubborn adults almost requires mallet and chisel. The sharing of Jesus' religion was always primarily a teaching process. It never could succeed save with minds sufficiently childlike to be teachable. Who else could learn God's will? Who else could perceive the beauty Christ saw?

The spiritual might of the childlike includes much more than this. The normal child's trustfulness of those who love him, and instinctive dependence upon them, is not only exceedingly winsome, but adds greatly to his teachableness. Childlike confidence and trust is the basis of all coöperation. The child's purity of character, his innocence, his stainless mind make him all the more lovable and bring God nearer his experience. His simple faith, so beautifully natural, finds God near, and unquestioningly real. It must have been some trustful child who taught Jesus that the pure in heart see God. It is easy to see that the religion of Jesus was the surviving faith of a trustful child who never outgrew his realistic experience of a loving Father-God. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

In the latter days of the medieval crusades the strange obsession passed swiftly across Christian Europe that if only an army of innocent children, with the love of Christ in their hearts and a child's implicit faith in God, should be marshaled and sent against the hosts of the infidel Turks, the spiritual might of the childlike would make such an army invulnerable, invincible. It is almost inconceivable that

such an idea could be put into action, but it was actually realized. Thousands of pious homes gave up their precious children, in response to this monstrous proposal, with all the intense devotion of primitive child-sacrifice. Thus the Children's Crusade became history. Its unreasoning, preposterous hope, its terrific overburdening of the frail constitution of children with untold hardships, its pathetic disillusionment and swift collapse furnished a unique chapter in the history of human folly.

The folly of the Children's Crusade lay not in its faith in the spiritual might of the childlike, but in the perversion of that faith. The might of the childlike is spiritual, not militaristic. The appeal of the child is the most winsome thing in the world; but its spiritual force is not to be wasted in battles. It demands and receives love's utmost devotion and sacrifice. Before its imperious claims an adult world yields everything of material value. This was the lesson of the Lindbergh tragedy. The loss of that precious child wrung the whole world's heart as no other single event in human history has ever done. "Even so," said Jesus, "it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." *

The spiritual penetration of the Master discovered this significant truth, that the ideal world will be made up of childlike people. Only the childlike can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Christians must keep

* Matthew 18:14.

the childlike heart. Growing old in spirit is to forfeit heaven. The unattractive traits of childishness must be outgrown; but childlikeness should be perennial. It is always the key to the Kingdom. To enter the kingdom of truth, the scholar must be as humble and teachable as a child. To enter the kingdom of beauty, the artist does likewise. To enter the kingdom of friendship, we must come with the child's trusting love, honesty, and loyalty.

Exactly as the life of the family is built around the simple childlike virtues, Jesus clearly saw that the same must be true on the grand scale, if ever the world is to become a Kingdom of God's good will, the universal Family of God. This was a spiritual discovery of deep significance, and a part of the original contribution of Jesus to the history of religion. First of all teachers and religious seers, it was Jesus of Nazareth who "put the child in the midst." There is a fine appropriateness in the recurring anniversary of Christmas that reminds the world that the truest symbol of the real religion of Jesus is neither altar, candle, communion cup, nor crucifix, but a new-born child.

XIV

THE SUBTLE POTENCY OF KINDNESS

THE Roman world was a cruel world that worshiped power, even on Olympus and Sinai. In every realm of life tyrannical despots were on the throne, in commerce and trade, in the courts, in politics, as well as on the field of battle. Nor was the home exempt, for the will of every husband was absolute law, sustained by government. These sinister facts were doubly oppressive in Palestine, where a proud race deeply resented the hateful omnipresence of the Roman eagles. From his earliest memory the Carpenter of Nazareth must have had rebellious thoughts about Rome's cruelty. Quarternions of armed legionaries from the Roman camp but five miles distant near Sephoris were continually antagonizing the Nazarenes by their military insolence, all through his youth. They doubtless searched many a defenseless cottage for refugee rebels, compatriots of Judas and Saddouk, with ugly threats of the same cruel treatment they had meted out to that nearest city, Sephoris, when they had utterly destroyed it. Militarism never deceived the Nazarene Boy with its delusive glories. He had been too close to its hellish cruelty.

What a peaceful revolution in this cruel world was forecast by the prophetic words of Jesus, so quietly uttered, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!" It sounded the death knell of tyrants with their heartless absolutism, and of the whole military system, with its ingenious refinements of cruelty, once the world should come to its senses. The blessed reign of kindness, however, comes slowly, and never by force but by reason, as one at a time men of the cruel heart discover what they are losing. Their cruelty is costing them not only happiness but the mercy which only the merciful win.

Professor Harnack of Berlin once said, "There is no other fact in all history which mankind needs so much to have brought home as this: *A man of the name of Jesus Christ once stood in our midst.*" And why so emphatic about the preëminent importance of the life of Jesus? What has been his supreme contribution to human history? However you phrase your answer, it will have to be in terms of the infinite love, the good will which Jesus incarnated in his life and taught the world in his religion. Kindness is the result of good will. It is the practical outcome of a loving heart. That Christ has vastly increased the kindness in the world, these many centuries, can hardly be questioned, in spite of the very imperfect way his followers have lived up to the ideals he has taught them. In contrast with all the world's religions, not even excepting passive Hindu-

ism, the outstanding characteristic of the religion of Jesus is kindness.

X CHRIST AND HISTORY'S VOICES

"Greece said, 'Be moderate—know thyself.'

Rome said, 'Be strong—order thyself.'

Confucianism says, 'Be superior—correct thyself.'

Shintoism says, 'Be loyal—suppress thyself.'

Buddhism says, 'Be disillusioned—annihilate thyself.'

Hinduism says, 'Be separated—merge thyself.'

Mohammedanism says, 'Be submissive—assert thyself.'

Judaism says, 'Be holy—conform thyself.'

Materialism says, 'Be industrious—enjoy thyself.'

Dillettantism says, 'Be broad—cultivate thyself.'

Christianity says, 'Be Christlike—give thyself.'"¹

That kindness is the first essential in Christian conduct we must infer from Jesus' emphasis on love as the summary of everything in his religion. When a certain lawyer, to test him, asked him what is the greatest commandment in the law, he answered with a promptness which showed he had no doubts about the matter:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets."²

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, p. 34. Published by the Abingdon Press and quoted with their permission.

² Matthew 22:37-39.

To be sure Jesus found both these laws in his own Bible, the former in the greatest passage in Deuteronomy, and the latter from Leviticus. Therefore it might superficially appear that no credit for originality should be given him in this connection, and that Judaism should be credited with being the religion of kindness. But the point is, the Old Testament nowhere combines these two elements of Jesus' twofold law of love, nor makes love supreme as the summary of the law. This remained for the religious genius of Christ to discover. There is, to be sure, a strong, fine emphasis in Judaism upon kindness, especially in the reformed synagogues today. But they derive it chiefly from the writings of their noble prophets, whose religion historically was almost wholly submerged by the dominant religion of the priests. Only reformed Judaism can claim to be a religion of kindness. In that and many other respects it is close to Unitarian Christianity.

Unitarianism has always stood nobly for the social religion of Jesus and especially for his emphasis on kindness. Their great leader in Boston nearly a century ago, Dr. Theodore Parker, was widely known as a great humanitarian. When the iniquitous Fugitive Slave Law was passed, making kindness to a Negro fugitive legally a crime, Doctor Parker was the first in his city to break the law and suffer for it. At that early stage in the anti-slavery movement such an act as his was extremely unpopular even in Boston. On

the following Sunday he made this heroic statement from his pulpit:

"To a law framed in such iniquity I owe no allegiance. Humanity, Christianity, manhood revolt against it. For obeying the impulses of humanity and the obligations of Christianity, in giving food and shelter to the fugitive I am fined a thousand dollars and subject to six months' imprisonment. Shall this terrify us into submission or arouse us to action? For myself, I say it solemnly, I will act with any body of decent men to nullify and defeat the operation of this law; and I feel confident there is enough manhood in Boston to protect every fugitive among us."

Borrowing the language of the Christian Scriptures, the Moslems are constantly referring to Allah their God as merciful and compassionate; but the spirit of their religion has very rarely borne out the sincerity of their language. In the biography of Doctor Pennell, a noble medical missionary from England who had a notable career in the heart of Asia, a story is told of a pious Afghan who observed strictly all the forms and ordinances of his Mohammedan faith, which obviously did not include love and mercy. He happened to show Doctor Pennell a prayer he had composed and of which he seemed quite proud. It was a prayer in which he begged that his bullet might never miss its mark; and he claimed that it had greatly improved his marksmanship. Yet before taking aim at his enemy after offering this petition, like a good Moslem he would add

this orthodox ending: "In the name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate."

This history of Christianity, to be sure, is not without its cruel chapters, just as lacking in human kindness as this story of the ignorant Moslem in Afghanistan. But that is not the fault of the religion of Jesus. Kindness is the beating heart of it, and any denial of kindness, any violation of his great law of love, only goes to show what a chasm there has been between Jesus and Christianity. How completely Jesus was convinced of the subtle potency of kindness as a rule of action is shown by many details in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in this notable passage:

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that persecute you, pray for them that spitefully use you, to him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other. . . . If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye have hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." *

Very slowly has the Christian world been discovering the practical possibilities of this amazingly revo-

* Luke 6:27-36.

lutionary teaching of Jesus. For centuries it has been called a "counsel of perfection" and an impractical ideal. It has frequently been ridiculed as "sanctified moonshine." But the strange thing about this extreme policy of kindness is, it works! There is subtle potency about it which is beyond the power of unimaginative realists to appreciate. It has repeatedly been proved practicable under most unfavorable conditions.

For instance Dr. George D. Wilder of Peiping, a leading Christian missionary in China, says emphatically that kindness is the most effective weapon any one can use against the Chinese bandits. Now the irresponsible brigand bands of China would seem to be, of all mankind, least amenable to kindness; yet he cites many instances in which they have yielded to kindness when they have refused to yield to force. "Show them a human kind of spirit," he said to the writer, "meet them in a spirit of service, or show sympathy for the unfair treatment they have suffered, which really drove them into banditry, and give them kind Christian treatment by contrast. Then they will never harm you or yours."

I believe that it is no less an authority than William James (in *Varieties of Religious Experience*) who vouches for the truth of this story of Richard Weaver, a British coal miner who had been a pugilist in his youth but after his conversion was a beloved evangelist. His fellow miners tried to get him to backslide and fight again, but Christ's spirit of kind-

ness had so mastered him, it proved impossible. One day he had an altercation in the mine with one of the toughest of the miners because he had taken the part of a young boy. "I've a good mind to smack thee on the face," said the tough. "Well," replied Weaver, "if that will do thee any good, thou canst do it." So he struck him a hard blow on the face. "Do it again," said the patient Weaver, turning the other cheek. Five times he struck him, but when the cheek was turned for the sixth blow, the man turned on his heel, while Weaver shouted after him, "The Lord forgive thee, as I do. And the Lord save thee." The next Monday morning the man burst into tears as his Christian comrade greeted him, and begged for his forgiveness.

The invisible electricity within every act of kindness is love. And love is not merely an attitude of the mind, it is energy. It is spiritual force of the highest potential. The self-styled realists who think of love as largely atmosphere, and ridicule it as sentimental folly, have overlooked this fact. Love is supreme power. It is not quite omnipotent, at least in the calendar of time, for it can be sometimes thwarted or delayed by the callous and the obdurate. But it has an amazing potency, none the less real because, like all force, it is invisible and usually unobtrusive. Why, love can even conquer hate; so strangely do men yield to kindness. Jesus recognized it as the very essence of the life of God, and gave him the new name, Love. He discovered its wonder-

working power and built upon it a mighty faith in the world's redemption. He saw that the world must be saved through love, for nothing else can work the miracle. It is sometimes claimed that Jesus never gave us a definition of a Christian. Yet he has given us this simple test, which is quite sufficient: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*" *

* John 13:35.

XV

THE RELIGION OF THE GOLDEN RULE

BECAUSE of his deep and genuine interest in people, Jesus was constantly putting himself in the other man's place. His sympathy with folks in any kind of trouble led him to feel that they really belonged to his inner circle of friendship, that is, to his own family. He would find it difficult to understand if his churlish brothers grumbled when he brought home to dinner a poor neighbor who had lost his wife and was out of work, just as if he were a member of the family. All his needy neighbors seemed really within this inner circle; and as the years passed and the outreach of his sympathy lengthened its radius, that circle constantly greatened. As he expressed it one day to a group of his close friends, with an expressive sweep of his hand:

"Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."¹

At the heart of his religion was the feeling that the common Father in heaven made them in truth one family. Hence should he not treat as a real brother

¹ Matthew 12:49, 50.

that poor scribe who had just lost his chance to teach in the synagogue school because his eyes had failed him? For some days he had tried to imagine how it would seem not to be able to see well. If men looked like trees walking, or if the letters on the synagogue rolls all looked alike to him, what a tragedy it would be! If he had been ruler of that synagogue he never could have told the man he could teach no more, that he must give his chair to a younger man with better eyes; for that scribe had a memory like Gamaliel himself. It was out of such practical thinking over the everyday happenings in Jesus' hill-country village that the Golden Rule was born. It came from such homely experiences as what to charge for that yoke he had made for Jacob ben Hilkiash's oxen; and how little he should collect for repairing the widow Asahel's leaky roof; and whether the money could be spared for a new tunic for his brother Joses, now that the boy wanted to be married. They were puzzling questions, but the Golden Rule helped him to see much more clearly, for it got him into the habit of putting himself into the other man's place and then joining their two viewpoints together. So it may have been when a younger brother asked him one day how he decided these questions, he told him his secret:

"All things therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." ^a

^a Matthew 7:12.

Or to put it in very simple language: Treat others as you want them to treat you. Or in briefest possible English: *Treat others as you would be treated.* And had his brother asked him the typical boy's question, "Why?" very likely Jesus would have answered, Because it is in the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"; and if you really do, you will be kind to him. And to be kind to him, you must play fair with him. The Golden Rule is simply fine sportsmanship.

So important did Jesus regard this principle of action which he had worked out in the laboratory of daily experience, it seemed to him to sum up the whole social duty of religion, as he said immediately after it: "for this is the law and the prophets." But how did he happen to say the same thing in another connection? How could he also say, following his twofold law of love, "on these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets"? Now two things equal to a third thing must either be identical or equal to each other; so there must be some close connection between the law of love and the Golden Rule. One says, Live a life of good will. The other says, Live a life of fair play. It is clear that the Golden Rule of kindness is but the law of love in action; while the law of love is the Golden Rule in terms of emotion. The former explains the motive for the latter; while the latter completes the former. The two together form the working nucleus of the religion of Jesus, from which it all develops.

Both are essential aspects of Christianity. Had he taught the world merely the law of love, our Christian duty would have been very hazy and indefinite. By developing the Golden Rule he suggests a formula for practicing the law of love.

This challenging principle of Jesus, Treat others as you wish them to treat you, is a most intriguing factor in his religion. To what extent was it original with him? The other great religions have no Golden Rule, except the negative form of it which we find in the teachings of Confucius. Nor do we find it in the Old Testament. Jesus certainly never saw the writings of Confucius, but he may have noticed a somewhat similar expression in the apochryphal book of Tobit, in the advice of Tobit to his son Tobias: "Do that to no man that thou hatest." * This, and a similar version of it in the teachings of Hillel, may have started Jesus' thinking, but the originality of his Golden Rule, in its positive form, can hardly be questioned. It is the Golden Rule of Jesus. Others beyond his horizon may have thought of it too, so fundamental is it to human living; but it is from him the world has learned it.

The dispute over the Golden Rule and its practicability did not begin in our generation. "Clean daft," or words to that effect, was doubtless the verdict passed by the village syndics at the fountain when the Galilean Carpenter first proposed it. And its high idealism, through all the centuries since, has

* Tobit 4:15.

been ridiculed by the cynical and cursed by the churlish in all human languages. Life is too complicated these days, we are told, to use any sort of a rule of measurement coming from the days when the camel was rapid transit. In the age of ammeters, stethoscopes, and speedometers, any Golden Rule nineteen centuries old is *ipso facto* an anachronism, and worst of all in the field of social ethics. But while the superficial have been rejecting it, the thoughtful have studied it and found it wisdom as well as kindness.

Then it is rather curious to see people passing on to other groups this embarrassing heritage from the days of simpler goodness. The diplomat is apt to say, "It may work in village politics, but certainly not in our complicated international relations. It might even lead us into the League of Nations or the World Court!" The practical politician is inclined to say, "Whether the Golden Rule might work in business may be a debatable question; but of course it would never do in politics. This game is a fight to the finish. There's no room in it for mere sentiment." We have all heard bankers and merchants say, as if on the defensive, "It may be all right in the school and the home, but it would never work in business. It would drive us all from Lincolns to Fords and probably put us out of business altogether in six months. Business is no charity game. It's a constant struggle to beat the economic cycle."

But what about the Golden Rule in the home, does it work well there? "Yes, too well," some one is likely to inform us. "It makes a slave and a drudge out of the mother, or any member of the household who sacrifices for all the rest." Shall we have to admit, then, that this principle of Jesus is simply a sentimental ideal, quite unattainable, at least until human nature is radically changed? Only craven Christians will so repudiate their Master's coin. The Golden Rule is eternally right because it is everlastingly fair; and whatever is right must somehow be possible.

The shrewd old Indian chief was doubtless correct, however, in the judgment he expressed after pondering over the Golden Rule the first time he ever heard it: "If only the Great Spirit who made man should put into man a new heart, it might be possible, but only thus." He could see the Golden Rule is not self-executing. It is method, not force. There must be love back of it to enforce it. No law or rule of action works automatically. Critics of Prohibition because "it does not prohibit" and critics of the Golden Rule because "it does not work" are equally unfair. Neither will the finest straight-eight motor work, without a battery to make it work. Hence Jesus' emphasis on the law of love. Love is the electricity for the Golden Rule's motor. Without a strong motive, the Golden Rule in a selfish world is as helpless as Prohibition at a Tammany picnic at Coney Island. But why blame your watch when you

forgot to wind it? Evidently the problem in the Golden Rule is the fundamental problem of good will. Given a family, a church, a school, a factory, or a community where people really like each other, and love each other like true brothers, then their mutual good will expresses itself through the Golden Rule naturally and well. And then Golden Rule living increases their good will.

"Exactly," breaks in the cynic, "that's why it never works, except where it isn't needed. This talk about good will is all cant. Human nature is born selfish and cannot be changed." So the discussion reduces itself to this: How much faith have you in human nature? Does it respond to kindness? The Golden Rule is Jesus' way of appealing to men who appreciate fair play and welcome it as a brotherly gesture of friendship. He had faith enough in human nature to believe that most men will respond to such kindness and are hungry for such friendship. Does humanity justify this faith of Jesus? Why, every decent dog responds at once to kindness. Would the cynics claim humanity to be lower than the brutes? Experience proves this policy of Jesus to be so successful that kindness becomes the better part of wisdom even in dealing with enemies. The quickest and surest way to conquer them is to love them and be kind to them, with a liberal application of the Golden Rule.

When Turkey joined forces with the mid-European powers in the Great War, both English and Ameri-

cans made haste to leave that country to avoid being interned. But courageous young Dr. Cyril Haas quietly stayed at his post. He is an American Board missionary at Adana, director of the International Hospital in that inland Turkish city. He prayerfully decided that the Golden Rule required him to stay at his post. If he were a Turkish resident there, he would not want the only modern hospital within many miles closed, just because there was a war going on. So he kept at work saving Turkish lives by his skillful surgery, though the Turks were all technically his enemies. He loved them none the less for that. He thought little about danger. He was too busy. And he never carried a gun! He remained there in perfect safety to the end of the war.

Meanwhile this skillful American succeeded in saving the life of the wife of a Turkish general, after the native surgeons had given her up to die. A few months later when this overworked young doctor lay very ill himself, almost dying from typhoid because there was no ice to reduce his fever, a rather remarkable thing happened which made possible his recovery. That grateful Turkish general (an enemy, by the way!) had been walking to the hospital daily in great anxiety to inquire about the young surgeon's condition, and finding him in dire need of ice, he called out his army, ranged them in a long line from the hospital to a snow-capped mountaintop in the suburbs, and hustled that snow to Doctor Haas' bedside before it could melt!—If the Golden Rule of

Christian kindness works with Turks, it ought to with Americans.

Yet many good people have doubts about the Golden Rule because they question its justice. "Why should I double my bookkeeper's wage, merely because he thinks he deserves it?" suggests a conscientiously puzzled business man. We may be sure that the Master would answer that that alone is not sufficient reason why he should. It is worth our careful notice that the Golden Rule is gravely misunderstood by two different types of people. Many assume that Jesus meant to teach: "Treat others as well as they think they deserve." But he never taught this; it would be grossly unfair. That would be *the Brazen Rule*. It certainly is not the Golden Rule. The rule of the Master was simply to treat another as you would wish to be treated if you were in his place. Let the bookkeeper consider his employer's viewpoint and learn the real status of his business. A true Christian wishes to treat all persons fairly. So the Golden Rule must always take into consideration not merely the two persons most involved in any given situation, but also all other persons concerned.

There is another counterfeit which might well be called *the Tinsel Rule*, and many there be who practice it. They like to think they are Golden Rule manufacturers or merchants, and sometimes claim it publicly; but ask them to explain, and they complacently say, "I treat others just as well as I think

they deserve." But that does not ring true. It looks a bit like the rule of gold, but it is nothing but tinsel. It is a counterfeit. If you claim the right to decide unassisted what others deserve, you are not going the whole road with the Master. This Tinsel Rule is too biased, too much controlled by self-interest. Both the rules of brass and of tinsel operate from a single viewpoint. The strategy and the justice of the Golden Rule lie in the fact that it requires two—your present point of view and your viewpoint if you were in your neighbor's place, thus safeguarding his interest. Imagination rather easily furnishes us this, and that is all that the Master expects of us. But if practiced with the motive of love, and the winsome appeal of human kindness, it has spiritual dynamics in it sufficient to revolutionize human relations and bring in the era of God's good will. This golden principle of simple human kindness is nothing more than what is daily practiced in the happy Christian family. It is clear that the whole strategy of Jesus' doctrine of the kingdom is just to carry over the social ethics of the Christian family into all the larger relationships of life.

In an earlier chapter we referred to the tragic modern problem of safety on the public highways. In the past seven years over 200,000 people have been killed by that deadliest weapon of peace, the automobile, besides many hundreds of thousands injured. These motor killings had risen by 1931 to 34,400, or one killed in every fourteen and a half

minutes, day and night. They are increasing at the rate of fifty per cent in six years, and doubling in ten. No other people on earth but reckless, lawless, speed-mad America would stand such tragic madness for a month. If such a thing were devastating Italy, every motor would be padlocked until drivers were taught to drive! Yet it is not simply a question of skill, but a question of ethics, of courtesy and kindness. Nothing but the Golden Rule can make our dangerous highways safe. We have this on high authority. The Chief Police Commissioner of Boston, who knows more about this problem than any one else in New England, in a recent appeal through the public press, stated his solemn conviction that if every auto driver should start the day with the prayer that he might be as decent on the road that day as he expects every one to be to him, the whole problem would be solved.

XVI

A NEW IDEAL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"BLESSED are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness," yet anxious and troubled are they who hunger and thirst *to know what righteousness really is*. This longing of the world's sincere millions was no slight challenge to Jesus' spiritual genius. To discover for himself the true meaning of righteousness was an early quest in his growing religion. So intensely and wholeheartedly did he make this quest, the outcome is even more perfectly seen in his life than in his words.

The challenging question, What makes Christianity Christian? might be answered in the single word, *Christlikeness*. But the use of that word sounds like begging the question. When that genuine Christian, Stanley Jones of India, asked Mahatma Gandhi what he thought might be done to make Christianity more thoroughly successful in his country, the Mahatma, whom Doctor Jones calls the greatest living non-Christian, replied:

"I would suggest first that all of you Christians, missionaries and all, must begin to live more like Jesus Christ.

Second, I would suggest that you practice your religion without adulterating it or toning it down.”¹

The saint of India, keen observer of the life of three continents, there put his finger on the exact cause of the semi-failure of missions. Other noble non-Christians have admitted that Christianity would speedily sweep the world were it not for the fact that Christians are so unlike Christ. Somehow their righteousness and his are different. As some one has suggested, we are inoculating the world with a mild form of Christianity, so that it is practically immune to the real thing. It is conceivable that the worst enemy of Jesus' own religion in the world is not an active rival like Islam or Buddhism, but a weak imitation of it; such a mild form of it that it serves like a serum to inoculate against it. In such a pass there is nothing in the world more important for Christians than to go back to the Master to study his ideal of righteousness.

Like all the prophets Jesus put righteousness first. It was the quality of life in the Kingdom of his dreams. Speaking to distracted hearers, anxious about many things, he said:

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God *and his righteousness*, and all these things shall be added unto you.”²

At one of the great climaxes of his teaching he used this beautiful expression: “Then shall the righteous

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, p. 118. Published by the Abingdon Press, and quoted by their permission.

² Matthew 6:33.

shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”³ But the question is, who are the righteous? Not necessarily those who think they are. Luke in one place refers to “certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at naught.”⁴ Such people Jesus alluded to with genuine irony when he said, “I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”⁵ The sensitive soul of Jesus very early in his life must have felt the hypocrisy of many of the religious leaders of the day. With deep conviction he expressed his opinion about their complacent “righteousness”:

“For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”⁶

All through his career as a teacher this conviction grew, as the bitter antagonism of this powerful group to him increased, until, three days before his death, he blazed forth with a terrific arraignment of their falseness that culminates in this scorching sentence:

“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”⁷

³ Matthew 13:43.

⁴ Luke 18:9.

⁵ Luke 5:32.

⁶ Matthew 5:20.

⁷ Matthew 23:27, 28.

It is very clear, then, that righteousness, in the religion of Jesus, was not an outward thing, but true inwardness of spirit, the ideal of the Psalmist who sang:

"Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
And in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know
wisdom." *

The cheapest possible religion is a routine of mere outwardness, of external performances that cost nothing but a little time or money, or a gift to some priest. It involves no self-giving, no expenditure of personality, no moral effort or restraint. Yet Jesus found the orthodoxy of his day expressing itself in many such external rites, such as ceremonial washings, restrictions about eating meats, ridiculously petty tithings, even of the weeds in the gardens, and minute elaborations of the law of Temple sacrifices. Though based on the priestly code in the Old Testament, these were largely the product of the rabbinical minds of the later scribes. And all these details, which had nothing to do with character, were supposed to be righteousness! Accordingly a "sinner" was one who did not attempt to observe these regulations of the rabbis, though he might have been a person of beautiful life. This whole system Jesus attacked not only as an unnecessary burden upon conscience, but an utterly false ideal of righteousness. He encouraged his disciples to join him in re-

* Psalm 51:6.

belling against it all, hence to the scribes they were all sinners, even Jesus.

Jesus' revolutionary contention was simply that *righteousness is moral goodness; not ritual but character*. He felt deeply that the pious motions of the scribes were not religion at all, but merely a substitute for it. It was the old fight of the prophet against the priest, all over again. Jesus took over the strong moral passion of Isaiah, Amos and Micah, their hostility to insincere priestly ritual. Then he spiritualized the prophetic messages with his deep insight into religious values and meanings. His logic was that righteousness was goodness, and goodness was Godlikeness; that God's will for men is demonstrated in his own character as a Father-God. His reason for urging upon his followers the loving life that even forgives enemies was "that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven"; and he added a sentence later, "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." * This was a high moral standard that he had set for his followers. It was the challenge of the flying goal. It could not be met by orthodox beliefs nor by ritualistic rites:

"Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father who is in heaven." ¹⁰

When, therefore, that heresy-hunting committee of Jerusalem scribes came to Capernaum to investigate

* Matthew 5:45, 48.

¹⁰ Matthew 7:20, 21.

the laxity of Jesus and his disciples in not observing the petty ritual requirements of the Pharisees, he gave them his frank opinion of their superficial righteousness:

"Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying: 'This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.'"¹¹

Another characteristic of righteousness, as Jesus taught it, has deep significance. Repeatedly he emphasized goodness as positive rather than negative. His Beatitudes are in sharp contrast with the negative Ten Commandments and much of the Old Testament Law. The teachings of the rabbis, both oral and written, included hundreds of senseless prohibitions, greatly complicating the ancient Law and making life a burden to their conscientious adherents. This was especially true of the Sabbath regulations which forbade even the tying of knots on that day of the week, or the eating of eggs laid that day; though one school of the rabbis claimed the Sunday egg could be eaten, but it was the Monday egg which must be avoided, for that was "prepared" on the Sabbath! Leaving corn on the ground for the chickens on the Sabbath was forbidden, for that would be sowing. And one must not walk on the grass, for that would be a kind of threshing. Nor could shoes be worn on the Sabbath, for that would

¹¹ Matthew 15:7-9; Isaiah 29:13.

be bearing a burden! Jesus dismissed all such prohibitions as mere nonsense, and broke as many of them as he pleased, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."¹² Then he demonstrated his meaning by doing all the positive good on the Sabbath that he possibly could, to make it really a holy and happy day.

Yet such is the irony of history, his followers down through the centuries have been all too prone to make righteousness a negative matter. Such prohibitions as the Puritans' rules against the pleasures of their day; the early Methodists' rules against wearing jewelry; the Amish Mennonites' rules against modern clothing or even the use of buttons; and the common negative policy of Protestant churches against many forms of popular amusement, without providing for the social vacuum thus created, have always savored more of the Pharisees than of Jesus.

The religion of Jesus was splendidly constructive, not negative. To his mind goodness was a creative disposition, for adventure in Godlikeness, not merely the passive omission of evil. Goodness involves the active expression of the best in character; the vital outgoing, overflowing, of the whole personality in self-giving. Goodness is never complacent, never self-satisfied. It involves continuous growth, rather more than any status of moral attainment. Dean Bosworth used to interpret the Parable of the Pharisee

¹² Mark 2:27.

and the Publican in the Temple as Christ's approval of the bad man getting better, rather than of the good man growing worse. As Professor Harvie Branscomb of Duke University says:

"Goodness of character is not so many good deeds, be they ever so valuable. *It is an ongoing process of the soul.* It does not mean character that is fixed, hardened into a mold, but life that is ever growing and reshaping itself to higher ends." ¹⁸

Finally the religious genius of Jesus perceived that true goodness is *heart-righteousness*. That old expression, "the upright in heart," found only in the Psalms, must have impressed him greatly, as he read his Bible. It is not easy for the modern mind to appreciate what a radically new ideal of goodness Jesus taught. We overlook the fact that ethics had never been emphasized by religion anyway, and that the two were not really united until the ethical monotheism of the Hebrew prophets. Even then it was a precarious union, due to the moral instability of the priestly system. The priests worried little over the moral character of their people. So long as they paid their tithes, offered their sacrifices and came occasionally to the Temple for worship, the priests let them live as they pleased. How characteristic of mere ecclesiastics, whatever god they worship!

But Jesus lived spiritually in a very different world. His test of all goodness is the motive in the heart.

¹⁸ H. Branscomb, *The Teachings of Jesus*, p. 172. Published by the Cokesbury Press, and quoted with their permission.

As the heart is, so the life must be, "for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaketh."¹⁴ Real goodness is heart righteousness, just as the essence of murder is hate in the heart, and the cause of adultery is impurity in the heart.¹⁵ It is a process which works both ways. The heart must be right to make the life righteous. Get the ideals and purposes of the heart right, and these ideals and purposes work out in character. How clear the vision of the ancient seer, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart."¹⁶ Goodness has little to do with reputation; the real character is goodness as God sees it. No wonder Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," for out of the heart are the consequences of life.

Now how does this radical ideal of righteousness apply in the modern age? How is it working in the church today? To use the cutting phrase of Barry of Oxford, how have "the acids of modernity" affected it? Walter Lippmann claims that life today is not a social order at all, in the old Greek or feudal sense, but rather "a field for careers, an arena of talent, an ordeal by trial and error, and a risky speculation." Jesus could not possibly forecast the exact situation President Hoover found himself in, on the day the platform was written on which he was to stand for reelection; nor the situation challenging the conscience of Secretary Fall, when the huge bribe was offered him by the oil interests for the oil rights

¹⁴ Matthew 12:34. ¹⁵ Matthew 5:22, 28. ¹⁶ 1 Samuel 16:7.

at Teapot Dome; nor the exact situation confronting any corporation executive or director in complicated modern business. Are we therefore to conclude that Jesus' ideals of righteousness do not apply today? Has he therefore no ethical message for our morally distraught age? He certainly has.

The lasting value of Jesus' wisdom on this vastly important subject of righteousness lies in the deep-cutting nature of his thinking. It did not lie on the surface of detailed problems of ancient Palestinian life. It plowed deeply into the subsoil of human experience and vital human needs. Nor did he clutter up the pages of the New Testament with complicated codes of conduct, like the traditions of the rabbis. He illuminated a few outstanding points at issue, and clarified a few great principles and eternal values involved in them, and left the rest to the providence of God. The simple fact that true righteousness is moral goodness, the fact that rightness is not ritual but character; the fact of the real inwardness of character; the fact that goodness is not negative but positive; that it is a vital, growing process of self-giving; that at its roots it is heart-righteousness, that the motive tests all conduct; that goodness is Godlikeness, and God is love; all these are fundamental facts which will be as true in the thirtieth century as in the first or the twentieth.

But these ideal principles are too general to be effective guides to conduct? Let a sincere man really live in the presence of them for a while, till he feels

their moral challenge and spiritual stimulus, and see what they will do to his conscience! To be sure he will wish to study further into Jesus' own way of living. And he will need to think more deeply about the implications of the Golden Rule and of the twofold law of love in relation to Jesus' ideals of goodness. We shall come back to this later in our Chapter XXIII.

Furthermore, what challenge does the re-thinking of the Master's concept of righteousness bring to the modern church? Surely this is fundamental, if Christianity is to be made Christian. How do his severe strictures upon the religion of the scribes and Pharisees affect our modern ecclesiastics who have lost the forest for the trees, whose exalting of the church has eclipsed the Kingdom? What will become of our timid "little Churchinesses"¹⁷ into which the adventurous spirit of the revolutionist of Galilee has degenerated, under the soothing effect of wealth and culture? What will happen to the type of church-member who prefers to listen to "the simple Gospel" which is safely and comfortingly other-worldly; and the priestly parson who is willing to cater to him.

In plainer words, what are our worshipers of the "Gothic cult" who enjoy the soporifics of worship more than the stirrings of conscience by prophetic preaching going to do when they discover that the religion of Jesus was and ever must be a social religion, and that ritual, with all its pious trappings and

¹⁷ See von Hügel's *Letters*, p. 288.

comforting opiates is no substitute for righteousness? The writer suspects many of them will quietly resign and withdraw from their church, unless the church, under pressure of gold, continues to compromise with its conscience, and remain a synagogue of the scribes and Pharisees.

The most vital lesson Jesus teaches us about righteousness is the lesson of his own method. His teaching is creative, not merely regulative. He discovered what goodness really is by experiencing God. All great Christians, for instance the Japanese saint and prophet, Kagawa, do the same. The consuming desire to know what is right leads to the communion with God which discovers God's will. Jesus revealed his own secret when he quietly said: "He that willeth to know his will, he shall understand the teaching."¹⁸ He that determines to find God's will, he that hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be rewarded by the clearer vision, for he shall learn more of God. Thus our study leads us to investigate next the meaning of prayer in Jesus' experience.

¹⁸ John 7:17.

XVII

THE TRANSFIGURING POWER OF PRAYER

IN a poignant little book Principal Jacks of Manchester College, Oxford, writes of the "lost radiance of the Christian religion." However that subtle radiance was lost by modern Christians, it will be recovered by re-studying the picture of Christ's transfiguration, and renewing our appreciation of prayer. The rationalistic and pragmatic spirit of the Western world has devitalized the prayer life of the occidental Christian. As the religion of Jesus becomes naturalized in the Orient, whence it came, we may recover the deeper values of prayer and its power to produce supermen. The East will again teach the West to pray; to find the hidden realities in communion with God. Even now the Christian world of the West stands humbled and amazed before a Gandhi, a Kagawa, and a Sundar Singh. In some occult fashion, not native to the Western mind, these men of prayer have attained the lost radiance for which the world is groping.

Before trying to realize the impression made upon the three privileged disciples who saw the radiant Christ at prayer, let us ask Professor Hogg of India

to reconstruct in imagination for us the Master's usual appearance:

"When as detached bystanders, we look upon his features, as it were, in profile, considering them singly and in repose, we seem to find none that is not human; none at least that does not belong to the nature which God designed for man. But let us move in front and catch his glance, so that the personality which lived by means of these human endowments may pierce our consciousness with a look in which its eager passion and tender pity, its searching purity and its gracious comprehendingness, its assurance of a world-redeeming vocation and its unaffected neighborliness, its kingly demands and its selfless devotion, make simultaneous impact upon our souls, and we shall then lose all intent to measure or to classify; we shall know ourselves in the presence of the utterly unique—One who exacts worship instead of submitting to appraisal." ¹

Yet the friends whose daily familiarity with him blinded them to his regal personality had to find his divinity through his humanity. Perhaps they never really discerned it till they saw him pray, that never-forgotten night on the mountain when they shared his communion with his Father.

It should be noted that Jesus' prayer life was very unobtrusive. His moral opposites, the Pharisees, believed in pious publicity and advertised their almsgiving, fasting, and praying by doing them publicly, sometimes even on a busy street corner, to gain a reputation for piety. All this was abhorrent to

¹ Professor Hogg, *Redemption From This World*, p. 65. Quoted in E. S. Jones, *opus cit.*

Jesus. So sacred an experience was communion with his heavenly Father, his own praying was mostly in secret. He seldom talked about it. But his comrades had not watched him long before they discovered that the chief secret of his power was his prayer life. He would slip away quietly, for hours at a time, to some quiet spot on a neighboring mountain where he could escape from the world and find God. This had doubtless been his life habit. All through his youth and early manhood he had found Nazareth hilltop a refuge from a crowded little cottage home after his day's labor, where he could do his thinking. He did not press upon his disciples his habit of private devotions. He seemed to teach prayer as a spiritual privilege rather than duty. At all events, his friends came to covet for themselves the strength and comfort they could see he gained from prayer, and finally asked him to teach them to pray. It was then he first taught them this simplest form of the Lord's Prayer:

"When ye pray say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." ¹¹

Here we find worship reduced to its sincerest simplicity, but with all needful elements in it for genuine friendship with the heavenly Father. It is

² Luke 11:2-4. The fuller form given by Matthew may have been taught by Jesus later.

nobly reverent, and breathes the quiet confidence of intimate conversation with a God who is near. Both material and spiritual needs are voiced by it; but it is far above the level of mere begging. It reveals clearly Jesus' own intimacy with his heavenly Father and the fact that he wished his friends to be on speaking terms with God also, which is of primary importance in religion.

It was sometime after this first lesson in prayer that the Master gave Peter and the two sons of Zebedee the privilege of sharing with him his evening devotions. He took them "up into a high mountain apart," an expression which fits only Mount Tabor, a lonely mountain quite near Nazareth. There he exemplified what Dean Inge said about him: "Jesus Christ came not to bring a religion, but to be a religion." He did not argue with his friends about the objective reality of prayer. He simply prayed, as was his custom. His prayer was probably not like a typical American prayer, strenuously continuous, running on uninterruptedly from the "O Lord" to the "Amen." It was an oriental meditation, proceeding as the Spirit moved, and in mystical mood pausing again and again to listen to the inner voice of his Father-God. This is apparent from the fact that while this quiet meditation continued, largely in silence, though for Jesus it was an intense and pregnant silence, the weary disciples fell asleep. Peter's report of that wonderful night is doubtless the basis for the narrative in all three Synoptic Gospels. It is

impossible to separate the dream elements from actual sight, as Peter described what he saw, while he was arousing himself from sleep. But it should be noticed that the shadowy forms interpreted as Moses and Elijah swiftly vanished, while the transfigured Christ remained.

The combined narrative describes Jesus' transformed appearance in these glowing terms:

"And he was transfigured before them; and as he was praying his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them." *

We have all rarely seen transfigured faces, illumined by the glowing inner light of intense spiritual conviction and exultant joy. This Gospel account reveals a similar reality in Jesus' experience, but in transcendent degree. His friends saw what prayer could do for their Master. It gave him such a vivid sense of God's presence, and such an in-flooding of the vital life of God into his whole personality, that the results were abounding joy, high exultation of spirit, and a strange radiance which made luminous his transformed countenance and even his simple clothing. It was as if the divine within was shining exultantly through the human; the spirit triumphing over the impeding medium of the flesh.

* Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29.

This remarkable experience is interpreted by Mark as apocalyptic. To his mind it was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophesy that "there are some standing here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." The three disciples came down from that mountain feeling that they had seen the kingdom of God come with power. They were sure that their Master had revealed the unique presence of God within him and had received the special evidence of God's favor which made him the true Deliverer for the New Age.

At all events they had witnessed a demonstration of what prayer meant to Jesus, an open channel for the intercourse between him and his Father, through which there flowed into his spiritually receptive life the overflowing tides of the vast energy of the eternal God. They were able to understand now why Jesus had night after night kept his lonely tryst. They understood now why it was that he could carry on day after day such nerve-taxing work, that would have worn out the strongest physique that had no source of spiritual renewal. When confronted by human need he was utterly prodigal of his nervous energy and his spiritual powers. Day after day all sorts of human sufferers swarmed about him, appealing pathetically for the health and wholeness he only could give. Very subtly they drew upon his sympathies and the vital overflow of personal power within him. He had a wonderful way of putting something of himself into the meager, broken life

of the sufferer, so that in healing the man's bodily and spiritual ills he sent him away triumphantly happy.

But any one familiar with the ebb and flow of psychic energy knows that such prodigal self-giving was at great cost of the Master's vitality. It not only tired him physically. It taxed him spiritually and left him nervously depleted. His reservoir of energy needed recharging. So always at the end of such a day he went to the source of all his power and prayed to, or rather with, his heavenly Father. Otherwise he would have had a nervous breakdown; then his miraculous cures would have suddenly stopped. It is rather clear that his subtle curative power was the miracle of prayer, the capacity for self-renewal with the healing energies of the invisible God. As he relaxed in the conscious presence of his heavenly Father and quietly prayed, he gradually regained physical rest and poise, mental elasticity, spiritual insight and psychic power. Again he had found the peace and renewal of God's life within him and was ready, superbly fit, for another day. Thus the manifold power of the Infinite flowed like a cosmic tide into the life of Jesus Christ and made him a superman.

Shall there be other supermen? The world needed but one Savior. But it needs many saviors, who not only incarnate afresh the spirit of the great Master but succeed in mastering his method of self-renewal by prayer. The writer is inclined to think that the

happiest man he has ever met is that challenging personality, Toyohiko Kagawa. He is a man of great personal charm and of utter sincerity of character. Though a profound scholar and author of many books, which have given him a remarkable personal following, probably the greatest in Japan, he has never lost his childlike simplicity of life. He is Asia's greatest Christian. Novelist, poet, preacher, social reformer, vigorous leader in both politics and religion, his creative personality is a harp of many strings. I do not know a more useful life in any country. His "Kingdom of God Movement" is the most hopeful social and religious enterprise in Japan.

Doctor Kagawa certainly knows life. Though born of a rich pagan father, who disinherited him for following Christ, he has spent years in the worst slums of Tokyo and Kobe, living in a one-room floorless cabin, befriending and helping the neediest poor. One night he shared his mat with a homeless waif who had nowhere else to sleep; but the poor man had trachoma, so now Kagawa is blind in one eye and has nearly lost the sight of the other. He reads with the greatest difficulty. Similarly he contracted tuberculosis. His arduous life has also given a serious affection of the heart. His love for the least of God's poor has cost him heavily.

Yet with more bodily afflictions than would kill four ordinary men, Kagawa lives miraculously on. Running social settlements in three cities at his own

expense; editing a magazine and writing from two to ten books a year by rapid-fire dictation, he wields remarkable political influence in rural Japan as well as in the cities. Lecturing widely on social reforms, and preaching constantly, sometimes six times a day, he astonishes all who know him with his capacity for work. His friends, alarmed a few years ago by the state of his health, forced him to take a six-week's vacation. Taking along a secretary, and reams of paper, he buried himself in the mountains. When he emerged, he brought with him completed manuscripts for four new books. His searching book, *The Psychology of the Poor*, was bound with portions of two of his sociological novels and distributed to every member of the House of Peers. The prompt result was the government's appropriating twenty million yen to attack the tenement problem, on a new ten-year plan to wipe out the slums in all Japanese cities.

And still this human dynamo lives. The explanation of the miracle is simply prayer. He is never too busy to pray. He prays when he rests and he prays when he works. The psychological and spiritual result is the same as in the prayer life of Jesus. His reservoir of personal energy is recharged. Prayer works its self-renewing miracle within him. Through the channel of prayer God's untiring patience and unwearied strength enter his very soul and make him a personality of power. The outcome, day after day, is not only a marvelous nervous and spiritual elas-

ticity, but also an astonishing stabilizing of his health. Physically he is keeping four deadly diseases, like raging lions, at bay. Doctors say he ought to die, with such a body; but he will not. His heart beats on. His work goes on. His blessed influence in the land he loves keeps on, and grows noticeably from year to year. His overflowing life of complete happiness and vast usefulness is a living monument to the transfiguring power of prayer. May this happy saint of modern Japan teach the Western Christian world to pray. The religion of Jesus is fed by hidden springs of prayer. A Christian cannot do his praying by proxy and be a follower of the Nazarene.

XVIII

THE MORAL CONQUESTS OF FORGIVENESS

BLEEDING to death on the cross in naked torment beneath the scorching sun, Christ prayed that his cruel persecutors might be forgiven! Under the circumstances, his prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was revolutionary enough to found a new religion on. No wonder it converted a dying thief and wrung words of admiration from a flinty Roman centurion! The religion of Jesus was certainly a religion of forgiveness; and not merely receptive forgiveness but forgiveness which works both ways. (Most religions have a forgiving God. Christianity is not unique in that. But the religion of Jesus requires forgiving men. More than that, it actually develops the forgiving spirit in men, the spirit of Jesus on the Cross.)

A Moslem patient whose eyes had been terribly injured by a mortal enemy was once brought to Doctor Pennell's hospital in western India. When told that he would never see again, he implored the surgeon with these words, "Oh! Sahib, if you can only give me sight long enough to go and shoot my enemy, then I shall be satisfied to be blind all the rest of my life." What a contrast with the Christian spirit of

an American missionary of whom Vincent Burns writes! She had just arrived on the field with her husband and her little child, when the former was shot by the savage Moslems whom they had come to help. But the religion of Jesus won in her struggle with hate. She took every dollar of her husband's life insurance and built with it a hospital for the care of the sick of this very tribe that had murdered her loved one. Her magnanimity so amazed the Moslem natives that they were half won, at the start, to the love of Christ brought to them by that brave little woman. Her work became remarkably successful.¹

Jesus well knew how deep is the human desire for God's forgiveness. We are told that on one occasion a young paralytic was brought to Christ by four loyal friends, who begged him to cure him. Before he paid any attention to the man's physical needs, Jesus took one look at the worried face and said, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Intuitively he saw that what troubled this man most was his conscience. He was under the burden of his sins, and what he needed first was forgiveness.² Perhaps the deepest gratitude Jesus earned in all his career was from Mary Magdalene, because he rescued her from a dissolute life and assured her of God's forgiveness. Referring to her later the Master said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same

¹ See V. G. Burns, *The Master's Message for the New Day*, p. 225.

² Matthew 9:2.

loveth little.”³ The language Jesus used in connection with this subject shows that forgiveness to him meant not merely escaping sin’s punishment but getting rid of the sin itself. “Remission” of sin means sending sin away. In the case of this sinful woman, so thoroughly penitent, and so loyal to the Master, Jesus seems to say that her great love for him had burned out the dross in her character and had driven away her sin by destroying the attraction of temptation.

Much discussion has centered in Jesus’ reference to an unpardonable sin.⁴ He called it the sin against the Holy Spirit. In effect, it is the persistent sin of a man who knows he is doing wrong but keeps on sinning “against light.” That is, he is really impenitent, if he is not sorry enough to stop, even though he may pray for forgiveness. But Jesus refers also to another unpardonable sin, the sin of the unforgiving spirit. His plain, blunt teaching was: “Forgive, if you would be forgiven.” Even God cannot forgive the man who harbors resentment in his heart against the man who has injured him; any more than he can forgive the man who persists in any other sin.

He gave a wonderful illustration which makes this teaching clear. It was the story of an unjust steward who owed his king a debt of about ten million dollars which he could not pay. When the king discovered the man’s defalcation he ordered him sold

³ Luke 7:47.

⁴ Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10.

into slavery with all his family; but when he begged piteously for mercy the king was compassionate enough to forgive him, and generously canceled the whole debt. Then the fortunate man turned about and showed his inhumanity by putting in prison a fellow servant who owed him only seventeen dollars. Hearing of this the king had the implacable steward punished severely. He even revoked his forgiveness, for he saw the man did not deserve it. Then Jesus ended the story with the warning: "So also will my heavenly Father deal with you, unless each one of you cordially forgives his erring brother." *

This principle of forgiveness shows deep insight into the spiritual process involved, and Jesus made it an important part of his religion. If a person does not show the forgiving spirit toward others, it indicates that he is lacking in sincere penitence for his own shortcomings. The truly charitable people are those who realize their own weakness and so cannot be severe with others. Not without long consideration Jesus put this important principle into the prayer he taught his disciples: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Then he continued:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." *

The royal right to harbor grudges against those who have injured us has been so long considered

* Matthew 18:23-35.

* Matthew 6:12-16.

by the human race as a personal privilege, it has been a slow process getting this high ideal of Jesus accepted even by normal Christians. Even in Jesus' lifetime his disciples were puzzled about it. The energetic Peter seemed to be doubtful about this overlooking personal injuries. Suppose some irresponsible youth persisted in borrowing his fishing nets and returning them in bad order, how many times would he be bound to forgive him? Probably he had some such bothersome experience in mind, the day he asked the Master,

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but Until seventy times seven." *

That is, there is no limit. A Christian will continue to forgive, times without number, as long as his brother's penitence makes forgiveness possible. The world's practice is, of course, far below this standard. Does common sense conclude that Jesus is needlessly lenient, that there should be a limit set even to Christian patience? What is likely to happen when you stop forgiving a person? Is he not likely to become your permanent enemy? And are you not hurting yourself most of all? But, come to think of it, is any one of us so free from wrongdoing that he has the moral right to stop forgiving others?

* Matthew 18:21.

The clue to this rather puzzling problem we discover when we think of forgiveness as simply an act of kindness. Christians must be kind. Therefore they must forgive. And we discovered in Chapter XIII there is a subtle power in kindness to soften the hearts even of rivals and enemies, owing to the conquering quality of love, which is the motive within the act of kindness. Likewise there is conquering power in forgiveness. There are two genuine moral conquests in forgiveness. It is a real victory over self when a Christian forgives one who has injured him. It is a triumph of Godlikeness, for "to err is human, to forgive, divine." And further, the surpassing kindness of overlooking an injury, of rising above the meanness of the petty grievance, and of wiping the slate clean for another chance, is so generous and big-hearted, it is such fine sportsmanship, it shames an enemy into being decent. There is vast moral energy in an act of forgiveness for the winning of new friendship, or at least of high respect and admiration. To refer again to our allusion to that young widow on the mission field. Was there anything conceivable that she could have done, more certain to win the confidence and love of the cruel murderers of her husband than to build that hospital to care for their sick?

If we would make our Christianity Christian we must be truer to our Christ who prayed for his enemies on the Cross. We must prove that there are no limits to the outreach of a Christian's love. This

little poem of John Oxenham's reminds us that the inner meaning of forgiving is giving for:

"Love ever gives—
Forgives—outlives,
And ever stands
With open hands.
And while it lives
It gives.
For this is Love's prerogative,
To give, and give, and give!"

XIX

REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS OF MANUAL LABOR

THE "curse of Eden" in the Genesis story has been a sad handicap to the laboring world. It has helped the world to believe that manual labor is a disgrace and a misfortune. This estimate of labor is also partly due to the fact that through most of human history the manual toil of the world has been done by slaves or by peasants who were serfs. Naturally the religion of the Carpenter challenged boldly this libel against most of humanity. Born to the routine of daily labor he felt it neither disgrace nor disaster that he had to work with his hands. He said to his critics with honest pride, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work."¹ It was a comfort to him to know that in his daily tasks he was coöperating with the great Toiler, older than all human toil. We may be sure he would warmly approve the sentiment in these modern lines:

"He cancels the curse of Eden and brings them a blessing
instead;
Blessed are they that labor, for Jesus partakes of their
bread.

¹ John 5:17.

He puts his hand to their burdens; he enters their homes
at night.

Who does his best shall have a guest, the Master of life
and light.

This is the Gospel of Labor; ring it ye bells of the kirk!
The Lord of Love came down from above to live with the
men who work.

This is the rose that he planted, here in the thorn-cursed
soil:

Heaven may be blest with perfect rest; but the blessing of
earth is toil." *

Whether or not he would approve so blithely the monotonous drudgery of a modern steel mill, at least he would deem the work as honorable as the carpenter's work or the king's. He had no patience with the old superstition that manual work is degrading. The religion he worked out at the carpenter's bench convinced him that you could not look down on any sort of necessary labor without looking down upon the laborer. And to despise any laborer is to sin against love. The snobbishness that scorns the "servant class" is thoroughly unchristian, for Jesus identified himself frankly with servants and thus honored that word beyond all telling, in the following passage:

"Let the greatest among you be as the younger, and let the leader be like him who serves. For which is considered the greater, the one who sits at the table, or he who waits

* Henry Van Dyke, *The Tiling of Felix*. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, and quoted with their permission.

upon him? Is it not he who sits at the table? But my position among you is that of one who serves." *

In this gracious but dignified language Jesus put himself forevermore by the side of every servant. Yet in spite of that there is a strong prejudice still in the world against manual labor, even among Christians. Christianity will not be quite Christian until we get rid of it. To grade people in a caste system in accordance with the supposed dignity of their several trades savors not of America but of India. The superiority of the "white-collar" trades, however, has been rudely shaken in the past decade, especially in the years of high wages when plumbers and skilled workers in the building trades earned three times the wages of many clerks, and more than many professional men. In England since an enlightened labor party actually ruled the country, public opinion of the dignity of labor has radically changed. In fact during the war, when daughters of peers were working in hospitals and scions of the nobility were caught scrubbing floors in Y huts, the true meaning of "service" was discovered. If the cause is only great enough, and the loyalty is only strong enough, there is no stigma on menial service. The loyal nurse in a royal hospital knew no limits to her service, even though her father sat in the House of Lords. No doubt the spirit of "*Noblesse oblige*" had something to do with it; but the magic

* Luke 22:26.

initials "R.N." were honor enough for any English girl, whatever tasks it might require.

This suggests that *love is never too proud to serve*; a truth constantly demonstrated by the mothers of the whole world. Doubtless Jesus had learned this from watching his own gracious mother; in character the peer of queens, yet rearing a family of at least seven children, with no household conveniences to lighten the incessant labor which she lovingly lavished upon them. Even had he not experienced the dignity of labor in his own manual toil, he would have learned it from his mother. Such mothers make sacred all personal service, for that is the kind of work mothers are constantly doing for those they love. Yet it is personal service, such as the work of a valet, or a Pullman porter, or a domestic servant, that many snobbish people are most likely to despise. It is significant that people who draw the color line try to confine Negro Americans to employments like these. Yet it should bring great comfort to people rendering helpful service in these ways to know that Jesus ennobled personal service in a most spectacular way the night before he died.

At his last Passover feast spent with his disciples he taught them some of the most important lessons of his whole career. There was one lesson that he evidently felt needed special emphasis, so he dramatized it to make it doubly effective. He must have felt that some of his friends were still snobbish; that he had failed, in the months they had been together,

to make them feel the real dignity of manual labor, especially of personal service. The ensuing scene is one of the most remarkable in all the Gospels:

"And during supper . . . Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands . . . riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So, he cometh to Simon Peter . . . and Peter said unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. . . . So when he had washed their feet and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Teacher, and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." ⁴

Only the simplest kind of literalists could feel the need of slavishly imitating this dramatic act of the Master and making a permanent sacrament out of it. But its plain honoring of so-called menial service is too apparent for discussion. How can any follower of Christ, after studying this revolutionary teaching, ever again deny that such service is thoroughly honorable and deserves our respect and gratitude? To treat as an inferior one who does any personal service for us, is to deny our Lord. In view of the world's general denial of this ideal of Jesus it is no wonder that big-hearted Christian, Edwin Markham, raises this question:

⁴ John 13:3-14.

"If Jesus should tramp the streets tonight,
Storm-beaten and hungry for bread,
Seeking a room and a candle light
And a clean though humble bed,
Who would welcome the Workman in,
Though he came with panting breath,
His hands all bruised and his garments thin—
This Workman from Nazareth?" *

More and more the manual laborers of the world are claiming Jesus as their own, and with very good right. The labor leader of a generation ago, Eugene V. Debs, called him "the martyred Christ of the working class, the inspired evangel of the down-trodden masses, the world's supreme revolutionary leader, whose love for the poor and the children of the poor hallowed all the days of his consecrated life, and gave to the ages his deathless name." The irony of Christian history is the fact that the working masses of men praise Jesus of Nazareth, but millions of them condemn his church as unchristian. This constitutes a challenge which the church must meet. It has been too complacent with its moderate success in serving the religious needs of the middle class. It must never forget that the most beautiful of all the appeals of Jesus was his call to the laborer:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find

* Edwin Markham, *"If He Should Come."* Quoted by permission of the author, the owner of copyright.

rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." °

Unquestionably the ideals of Jesus have put a justifiable pride in his work into many an honest laborer's heart. Thus the Nazarene has had strong influence in the social movement by which the world's workers have been coming to their own. Not only have slavery and serfdom become past history, but the marvel is that with the passing of kings and thrones, class-conscious labor is actually ruling in Germany and Russia, and has recently been dominant in England and France. Farmers in many lands have found new self-respect with increasing technical efficiency. The man who toils, with hand or brain or both, at last, in many quarters, has won his place in life, the place of honor which Jesus long since gave him. The producers now know the world must depend upon them; and the world honors producers as never before in history.

But the moment is a critical one for religion. Russia has exiled religion, and a rampant, atheistic, workers' republic is actually fighting God. In fact they have created a new godless religion in communism, and with tremendous enthusiasm claim they are building a new world. Because their common laborers have a voice in the management of industry they reveal a socially creative joy in their labor which is a new page in economic history. To be sure, the

° Matthew 11:28-30.

kingdom of heaven they are trying to build is a materialistic kingdom built on selfishness. It is not, however, personal selfishness but class selfishness; hence it has all the fervor of a noble altruism which makes it seem like religion.

The longer the Soviet experiment continues with reasonable success, the greater will be its challenge to the Christian religion. Any priestly, non-prophetic church, like the old Orthodox church of Russia, always hand-in-glove with tyranny, knows it to be its most dangerous enemy. On the other hand the social religion of Jesus finds in it nothing to fear. Every noble aspect of Soviet fraternalism, which seems to be building brotherhood in Russia, can be found in the religion of the Nazarene Carpenter, and in far more spiritual form. The social idealism of the Master with its spiritual brotherhood based on the love of God and fellow men should prove more than a match, in its appeal to the working world, for the crass realism of a class-selfish communism. But to win this victory, the Christian church must more sincerely become the church of the Carpenter Christ. It must convert its traditional Christianity to the religion of Jesus.

XX

A NEW CONCEPT OF UNSELFISH SERVICE

"TREAT yourself to the best" is an advertising slogan which is placarded on many barn doors and still mars much rural scenery. It is a crass appeal to instinctive selfishness. The word unselfishness does not occur in the Bible; nor does its opposite, selfishness. The question of the legitimacy of self-interest as a dominant motive in life was seldom raised before the Christian era; but Jesus flatly challenged it. He recognized that the pagan world was built upon the corner stone of selfish power, and he felt this to be so deadly to brotherhood, it must not survive in a Christian world. Out of the depths of his own experience he developed this foundation stone of his religion. The revolutionary character of the idea is clear as he draws this sharp contrast:

"Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."¹

¹ Matthew 20:25-28.

He banked everything on the essential greatness of unselfish service. The royal game of kinging-it, of lording it over people, builds no better world. It is pure sadism to take any satisfaction in compelling folks to bend to your will. Normal human beings prefer coöperating friends to unwilling subjects. Likewise in all life's relationships. He who would lead in anything must found his leadership on service. This is true even of kings, if kings would be loved instead of hated. Among the best-loved kings are Albert of Belgium and Victor Emmanuel of Italy. At the time of the Messina earthquake in Sicily, the king and queen of Italy worked hand in hand with the relief agencies, succoring their afflicted people; and the more actual hardship endured and danger incurred, the more they earned the admiration and lasting affection of their people. Yet this was not a circumstance to the utter devotion of the Belgians to their heroic king who shared their crucifixion during the late war.

Though this principle of Jesus has made real progress with the high-minded both in professional and business life, it still has a world of instinctive selfishness to conquer, which yields slowly to ideals. The pagan conviction is deeply rooted that all generosity is wasted, and that charity does more harm than good. Granted that much ill-advised charity is wasted, it is never wasted on the giver! "It is more blessed to give than to receive," because, whatever the effect on the recipient, it always enlarges the

giver's heart, broadens his charity, deepens his sympathy, and thus increases his capacity for living. On the other hand the curse of selfishness is that it knows no pity. It is a double curse. It curses the life that indulges it, by making it hard and unfeeling. It curses the needy and neglected life by depriving it of the human love it craves as well as the material help it needs.

From Jesus' viewpoint, then, there is good reason why *the strong should help the weak*. Chiefly because they are both children of the Father, and therefore brothers. The great principle of mutual aid is not merely Christian, it is human. Wherever the old patriarchal family system prevails, notably in China and Japan, any member of the clan can call upon any other in time of need and will not call in vain. But this is not the ideal of Jesus, for it stops at the door of the clan. The callousness of wealthy Chinese toward the pauper at their door is as thoroughly pagan as the Brahman's utter contempt for India's untouchable millions who face the wolf of starvation every day. There is no "Community Chest" in any city of Asia, for obvious reasons.

Yet somehow this Asiatic disregard for the needy outside one's family or clan does not seem so reprehensible a negation of the religion of Jesus as we find in modern German writers like Nietzsche. They ridicule Jesus and his "soft religion." They believe Christian sympathy to be a display of weakness. To help the weak and thus prolong the life of the unfit is to hinder the progress of the race. Evolution has

meant for them only the survival of the fittest, as the strong have made the weak their prey. They are blind to many beautiful pages of the long history of life, that report how many species have survived extinction by working together for mutual aid against the cruel strong. Thus the bees and the ants have outlived the ichthyosaurus.

In any case, shall civilized humans stamp on all their noblest impulses, just because big fish eat little fishes, and there is murderous war in the jungle? Meanwhile in the jungles of human life, in city slum, in selfish mart, in sweatshop and underpaid mill, the grind of human flesh goes on, wherever the will of the tender Christ is thwarted and the weak are crushed by the strong. With vivid fancy, but true to the Master's heart, Lowell brought this challenge of the Lord of pity to the brutally selfish of his day:

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set he in the midst of them;
And as they drew back their garment-hem,
For fear of defilement, 'Lo, here,' said He,
'The images ye have made of me!'"²

² James Russell Lowell, "*A Parable*."

Though such a challenge is still needed in our day, we rejoice in the ever-growing ranks of the brotherhood of pity. Only ignorance of history can blind us to this cheering fact, that Christ, not Nietzsche, is winning. Efficiency is not confined to business with its mass production. Christian kindness is increasingly efficient in relieving human suffering and need. That the cause of the unfortunate is the cause of Christ is made clear in many of his teachings. It is highly significant that in his dramatic picture of the Last Judgment he pictures unselfish service as the final test of character:

"Then shall the King say unto them at his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me to drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? . . . And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." *

But can the Master's final approval be won simply by occasional deeds of charity? That was exactly the theory of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned. Yet through most of the Christian era the Pharisaic idea has prevailed, that if only one played the part of the Lady Bountiful now and then, a Christian might

* Matthew 25:34-40.

be as selfish as she pleased the rest of the time. With clear but misguided conscience the average wealthy Christian has considered himself generous if he gave large subscriptions to popular charities, and then conducted his money-making by the pagan rule of Rob Roy, "Let him take who has the power, and let him keep who can." There is a serious ethical fallacy back of such a myopic conscience. Money-making and money-spending are two things, not one. And noble ethics of distribution can never condone bad ethics of acquisition. The long day has about ended in which complacent society accepts the sop of charity as a bribe to allow the barons of business to violate the Golden Rule by excess profits.

The Christian world has been very slow in learning from its Master the lesson that even in business, in the clashing, competitive struggle of trade and commerce, the principle of unselfish service must be reckoned with. High-minded physicians and surgeons were perhaps the first to learn it. There are doctors of course who put profits before service, but the leaders of this noble profession do not. The national organization, the American College of Surgeons, to which leading members of the profession are elected, frankly adopted, long ago, the service standard of Jesus. Every one of their members has to sign the following pledge, which resembles the oath taken by young David Livingstone at the end of his medical course:

"I pledge myself to pursue the practice of surgery with thorough self restraint, and to place the welfare of my patients above all else; to render willing help to my colleagues, and to give freely of my services to the needy. I pledge myself, so far as I am able, to avoid the sin of selfishness, to shun unwarranted publicity, dishonest commercialism, and money-seeking as disgraceful to our profession, and to make my fees commensurate with the service rendered and with the patient's rights."

The writer found the above pledge, signed and framed, on the wall in a great surgeon's office. Below it was this very apt quotation from Ruskin, "If your fee is first with you and your work second, then fee is your master, and the lord of all fee, who is the devil. But if your work is first with you and your fee second, then work is your master, and the Lord of all work, who is God."

But can any good reason be given why our surgeons and physicians should be ruled by the service motive of Jesus Christ, and the rest of us be governed by the profit motive? Claiming profits without adequate service rendered, acts like a boomerang anyway. Sooner or later unjustified gains and unearned dividends cost more than they are worth. It is rather startling to discover that one of the world's greatest associations of business men, International Rotary, concedes the accuracy of this philosophy of Jesus and admits that they learned it from him. For a number of years their motto has been, "He profits most who serves best," derived directly from Mark 10:44. Even though the word

"service" has become greatly overworked of late in business circles, not always sincerely we fear, the fact that they find it necessary to use the word is highly suggestive. Such phrases as "realtor service," "garage service," "radio service," stress the point that successful business must be based on service.

But it is one thing to *sell service*, as the makers of electric refrigerators do, and charge for it in the original cost price. It is a radically different thing to base the whole business structure on the service motive, either *with* the profit motive or in place of it. Is not this what is really involved in this ideal of Jesus? It is certainly involved in the motto of the Rotarians, "He profits most who serves best." They admit that service must at least share with profits as the fundamental business motive, whether or not they are living up to it.

The religion of Jesus has thus raised the question in every generation, Should self-interest be the dominant motive in the Christian's life? The answer has almost invariably been, Yes, provided the Christian's self-interest has been mitigated by generous charity. An entirely new situation has arisen, just in the last decade. It is rather awkward for Christianity to hear of an anti-Christian movement actually outdoing Christians in adopting (in part) this principle of Jesus. The Russian Soviets seem to have eliminated the motive of personal profit from all business in that vast country. We shall discuss in a later chapter whether they have gone beyond Jesus in abolishing

private property. They have abolished individual riches in order to build up a gigantic Monster of a rich empire, half Politics, half Business—and all dominated by a little tyrannical oligarchy who seem drunk with power. It is a debatable question whether this has really brought them any nearer than Wall Street to Jesus.

But superficially the communists seem to have stolen Jesus from the church that bears his name. This seems to the ungodly a huge joke on Christendom. And in all lands it is making a very subtle appeal to manual laborers. They are watching the Soviet experiment with astonishment and fascination, but are not yet wholly convinced. What is to be done in such an unprecedented situation? Is Christianity to acknowledge itself bankrupt? Must these Soviets be appointed receivers for Jesus' great enterprise, the kingdom of God, and guardians of the noble ideals of his social religion? If this should come to pass, there would soon be not enough left of the ashes of Christianity to fill a Greek Patriarch's censor.

Norman Thomas regrets that "a religion which contains in its sacred books so much dynamite, should have been in the main only an opiate." Yes, there is much dynamite in the social religion of Nazareth. But dynamite may be used for constructive purposes. The present writer is confident that the dynamite of the revolutionary Jesus will be used constructively by socially minded Christians, rather

than by his rivals. This seems the only way in sight to meet the ethical challenge of the Soviets. And the root of the matter is the searching question, What is to be done with the profit motive in business?

Mr. Thomas, himself a very sincere Christian, puts it very sharply in his recent article in the *Christian Century*, "If a man does accept in any sincerity a faith in Jesus and Jesus' God, whether he calls himself orthodox or modernist, it is impossible to see how he can be at peace with the present social order whose god is profit." ⁴ Religion may be "at the end of an epoch"; but it is not the end of religion. And many discerning men of affairs are wondering whether the present world economic débacle may not prove the end of an epoch for business. Many are now asking, "Is the capitalistic system breaking down?" A Christian need not become a Soviet, nor, like Norman Thomas, a socialist, to see very ominous signs in these times. But there is a brighter omen if the present breakdown brings the end of the profit motive as the dominant motive in the business system. The profit motive curbed and humanized may still be retained as a legitimate incentive for some generations to come, but self-interest must give way to service of the commonweal, as the *dominant* motive in the working world.

The annual convention of the Protestant minis-

⁴ Norman Thomas, "Religion at the End of an Epoch." See *Christian Century*, issue of November 4, 1931. Quoted by permission.

ters of Ohio, recently held in Cleveland, representing all denominations, committed themselves boldly and unanimously to this principle in the following paragraph, quoted from their resolutions:

"A just regard for human beings has never been central in the capitalist system. . . . We do not believe in the principle of socially irresponsible individualism as it operates in economic affairs. No man in a Christian society has a right to live wholly to himself. They that are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak. The family, the state, or the church would disintegrate on any other basis, and society cannot survive without a social aim.

Human life is paramount and its safety is only guaranteed when the aims of life are spiritual and not material. The profit motive as a dominant motive cannot be reconciled with the Christian ethic. The handwriting is on the wall against any system which puts a material goal above the interests of human life."⁵

Now in discussing a matter of such vital and universal importance as this, let us not quibble about "the Jesus stereotype." Let us be fair enough to admit, that whatever Jesus' ignorance about the complexities of modern business, he lived in just as selfish an age as ours, and exactly *the same principle* is involved now as then. The fact that he had no "chain stores" exploiting eight-dollar-a-week clerks, to pay thirty-five per cent dividends, makes no difference. He saw every week the caravans of rich Damascus merchants doubling their investments

⁵ The full statement of these convention findings may be found in the February 24, 1932 issue of the *Christian Century*.

by exploiting slave labor. Excess profits are unjust in all generations. They always mean exploitation. All profiteering is inevitably challenged by the mind of Christ, jealously safeguarding human rights. The Carpenter of Nazareth, and all who really follow him, charged for services rendered, on the human basis, not the profiteering basis. In a Christian world the profit motive must yield primacy to the service motive.

XXI

NEW INSIGHTS INTO NEIGHBORLINESS

IN the year 1916 when that subtly dangerous disease, the influenza, swept over this country after ravaging Europe from Asia, the modern world was found to be epidemically a unit. In even more positive ways the terrible business depression of the past two years has also proved to be a world epidemic, spreading rapidly from country to country, largely due to the economic sins and unbrotherliness of humanity. By this time we should have learned the lesson that just as the deadliness of modern science has now made war an impossible luxury for the world's hate, likewise the world has become so interdependent in business it is now a closely involved economic neighborhood. We have now an International Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps it may prove the world's final peacemaker.

A few years ago several banks in Memphis, Tennessee, failed because the Russians were compelled to stop drinking tea! It was wartime, and not only were the Russians poor and millions of them in the army, but trade with India was largely cut off. So the India tea merchants and tea growers piled up great stocks of tea in their warehouses and then

folded their hands and faced starvation. Incidentally India that year had to forego buying its annual cotton dress. So the Bombay importers cabled the London exporters to ship no more cotton cloth. This closed the mills of Birmingham for many months. So the British stopped importing cotton from New Orleans. That spread consternation all through our cotton-growing South and merchants in the Mississippi valley had a panic year, for there was no money to buy anything. They could not pay their notes at the banks in Memphis. So the Tennessee banks failed because the Russians stopped drinking tea.

Fortunately it works the other way also. Piano dealers in Venezuela and piano manufacturers in New York grew suddenly prosperous a few summers ago because a man in Omaha invented "Eskimo pie." It seems there was for some reason a slump in the cocoa business in Venezuela. A large shipment of pianos had to be stored in Caracas, because the prospective owners could not pay for them. Then the nameless Omaha man ingeniously coated his ice-cream slices with chocolate and gave the new delicacy so taking a name, the fad for Eskimo pie within three weeks swept the country. It created an enormous demand for chocolate. Cacao dealers in Venezuela emptied their stocks and doubled their price. This created a big credit in their New York bank, which paid the piano manufacturers' overdue bills, released the pianos stored in Caracas, and made many a Venezuelan cacao-raiser's daughter happy—

just because some man in Omaha invented Eskimo pie!

The modern world is certainly a neighborhood commercially, but not yet socially and religiously. There are still many tragic barriers in human life that frustrate brotherhood, in spite of the efforts of Jesus. The pathos of it lies in the fact that these walls of suspicion and hate are usually man-made and unnecessary. They separate neighbors, and often both neighbors helped to build them; as Mrs. Dwight Morrow's little poem suggests so exquisitely:

"My friend and I have built a wall
Between us thick and wide:
The stones of it are laid in scorn
And plastered high with pride.

"We talk across the stubborn stone
So arrogantly tall—
Only we cannot touch our hands,
Since we have built the wall."

The discerning St. Paul wrote to the Gentile Christians in Ephesus that Christ is the world's peace, that he is breaking down "the middle wall of partition" between men and races of men. Jesus knew that until this is fully accomplished, the world can never be the one great family of God of which he dreamed, and which Paul so nobly proclaimed to the men of Athens.

Jesus' own experience taught him some of the obstacles in the way of human brotherhood. He en-

countered them even in his own family. It was not a united family, as we have already seen. And whenever he traveled and came into contact with other racial groups, he was confronted with prejudices and racial hatreds. Partly for this reason he felt obliged to advise his disciples, when they started their first Gospel tour, not to go to Gentile or Samaritan cities.¹ Once at least they tried to enter a border town of Samaria, on the way to Jerusalem, but were driven out by the unfriendly villagers merely because they were Jews. It put the disciples in a fighting mood. Two of them proposed to the Master that he call down fire from heaven to destroy these recalcitrants. But Jesus showed not the slightest resentment. He realized there was nothing personal in this unneighborly treatment of the Samaritans. Very likely some hateful Jewish travelers had given them good cause for it.²

That experience must have hurt keenly the friendly soul of the Master. What a pity that a neighboring people, so near of kin to the Jews and living right in the heart of the country, should be their bitter enemies. And this mutual hatred had been going on for five centuries. It was mainly the fault of the Judeans, they were so narrow in their sympathies and so hotly patriotic. Yet why should they indict a whole race? There were good, kind Samaritans, not at all like these fiery fellows in this little border village. He knew, for he had met them.

¹ Matthew 10:5.

² Luke 9:52.

When he had a chance he would speak a good word for them. It might help to make his fellow Jews more kindly toward them.

His opportunity came a few days later, on this very journey; perhaps as the caravan climbed the Jericho road. The occasion was when a hair-splitting scribe tried to get Jesus involved in an argument, to show his own superior wisdom. In the discussion, reference was made to the law about loving one's neighbor. Then "to justify himself," as Luke tells us, the man asked Jesus that baffling question, "But who is my neighbor?" Perhaps he expected Jesus to say the residents of the same street were his neighbors, but not those common folk down in the valley. But instead, the unaccountable Carpenter told him a story. The world calls it the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

That steep Jericho trail was so notoriously dangerous, so infested with brigands, few merchants ventured upon it alone. But perhaps this reckless Jew missed his caravan that morning and tried to overtake it. He had a stout heart and a stout staff; he guessed he'd take his chances. But those terrors of the neighborhood, the plundering Arabs, heard his sturdy step and probably sandbagged him at some blind corner. He must have put up a good defense for they nearly had to kill him to get his money. At least they left him for dead, for they even stole his clothes. It was probably a true story, or the scribe would have challenged Jesus' facts, his allusions to

the priest and the Levite were so disparaging. How stony hearted they were! Too selfishly busy to stop to help a stranger, they feared ceremonial defilement if they touched the body. Anyway he was no neighbor of theirs. The priest may have said, "I'll let that Levite up the road help him." "I don't need to; the priest did not," said the Levite, two minutes later to his conscience. Then the good Samaritan put them both to shame. What mattered it to him that the helpless victim was only a hateful Jew? He was a brother man in dire distress, whatever his race or name.

So he ran to him and gave him first aid, cleansing his wounds with wine for an antiseptic, then binding them up with healing olive oil. Mounting him on his own mule he hastened to the nearest inn where he gave him every possible care, as tenderly as if the stranger were his own blood brother. We can imagine the wry face with which the captious scribe unwillingly acknowledged that the Samaritan had been a good neighbor to the unfortunate traveler; that a hated Samaritan could be a neighbor to a Jew!

The severest test of neighborliness for a Jew was to be friendly with Samaritans. That involved overcoming centuries of inherited prejudice. If Jesus could do that, he would find it rather easy to fraternize with Greeks, Romans, and other Gentiles. It shows that he accepted the world as his neighborhood and that he would have agreed with Paul that

"God hath made of one blood all races of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." ³

The apparent exception to Christ's racial charity, in Matthew 15:21-28, yields to careful examination. The first of this chapter shows how deeply Jesus was stirred by the characteristic Jewish narrowness of those Jerusalem scribes. It aroused his strong antagonism. Then he hurried off on a sudden journey, the longest recorded in his career, clear out of Galilee to the country of the Sidonians. He seemed to want to get away from such narrow people as these critical scribes. We notice that when he met the Canaanitish woman there, who begged him to cure her daughter, he gave her a threefold test of faith before he granted her request; first silence, then two replies such as those unsympathetic scribes would have made, who had been on his mind all the while. Then he gladly rewarded her tested faith. He who gave such approval to the good Samaritan could not do otherwise. For him the human race was one great family, in spite of all the walls of partition—prejudice, language, ignorance, and distance. A narrow nationalism would never win his favor, for it is simply selfishness on the grand scale.

The ancient law in Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," included as neighbor "the stranger that is within thy gates." ⁴ Even the Hebrews, with all their racial pride and nationalism, were thus taught to love the immigrants who had

³ Acts 17:26.

⁴ Leviticus 19:18, 34.

come to live with them as neighbors. Schauffler's recent poem, "Scum o' the Earth," is a reminder that all too many of us in this Christian land have less charity toward our newcomers than had the ancient Hebrews. But the true Christian ideal of neighborliness far transcends that. Its cruising radius is world-wide. It gave birth to the foreign missionary movement a century ago, the basic principle of which is that all mankind are our neighbors, and deserve every sort of help we can give them. The altruism which is largely the product of social Christianity has in the past half century enormously widened its outreach. The world is now so small, and communication so swift, that any human disaster anywhere finds speedy response in Christian America. Famines in China, Belgium, and Russia, pestilence in Serbia, earthquakes in Japan and Sicily, massacres in Armenia, floods in China have all found America near. Such appeals of human distress to the Christian conscience of our land have never been made in vain. The International Society for Crippled Children, the World Student Christian Federation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the World Alliance of the Young Men's Christian Associations, are but a few of the countless expressions of the Christian purpose to enfold the world with the neighborly spirit of the Good Samaritan.

As radio becomes more widespread and the voices of all lands are brought to each other's firesides, the Christian spirit will have a vastly better chance to

overcome the racial prejudices and international barriers which have given rise to war. In place of the war spirit we shall find generous neighborly sympathy. This kindly verse of the sympathetic Walt Whitman shows how such world-friendship starts: *

"This moment yearning and thoughtful, sitting alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning
and thoughtful;
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Ger-
many, Italy, France, Spain;
Or far, far away in China, or in Russia or Japan, talking
other dialects;
And it seems to me if I could know those men,
I should become attached to them as I am to men in my
own land.
O! I know we should be brethren and lovers.
I know I should be happy with them!"

A religion of love can recognize no geographical limits. The sinful life of the Magdalene, the sufferings of the lame, the leprous, the blind and the hungry, all wrung the heart of Jesus until he was able to help them, regardless of race. It is the pain, the sin, the suffering of the world that knocks at the hearts of Christians and compels us to send missionaries everywhere to relieve and save. When Dr. Catherine Mabie arrived in Africa, she was repelled by the degradation of the natives, and asked herself, "Can I ever care enough for these people to live among them and serve them?" But their manifold human needs pulled on her sympathies, and their

* In *Leaves of Grass*. Permission of Small, Maynard & Co., publishers.

simple gratitude for her medical skill and friendliness soon changed her hesitation into noble sacrificial service.

It is this spirit which will in time break down all racial prejudices and antipathies, through better understanding and the practice of neighborliness, until the day comes when war will be impossible because of the lack of hatred, without which no man voluntarily can kill. Then shall be fulfilled the noble faith of that gentlewoman of England, Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

"No more Jew or Greek then—taunting
Nor taunted; no more England nor France!
But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only, to mark the advance
Onward and upward, of all humanity.
For civilization perfected
Is fully developed Christianity."

Meanwhile the organized Christian forces of the world are promoting world friendship with bright promise for the future. Such experienced leaders in Christian diplomacy as Mr. Harry T. Baker, general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in Constantinople, working with marked success with the boys and young men of many races in that strategic city, are producing a mutual confidence and understanding which is likely to prove the basis of permanent neighborliness and brotherhood.

A significant conference of the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations brought to-

gether at Cleveland last summer the leading workers with youth from nearly fifty countries. Never before had that cosmopolitan city seen such a demonstration of the fact that the world has now become one great neighborhood. A striking feature of this demonstration was the participation of some four hundred Christian older boys, selected representatives of forty nations. Their attendance was largely made possible by a friendship fund composed of small gifts from thirty thousand American boys who invited them to this country as their special guests. After the conference most of these visiting boys traveled from city to city to become personally acquainted with their American comrades in "the Y," and spent weeks fraternizing with American and Canadian older boys in summer camps in more than thirty states and provinces. The value of such a project in overcoming racial prejudices and multiplying lasting friendships between the youth of many nations is beyond all computation. No future war could ever persuade these boys to fight against each other. Their mutual understanding and complete confidence in each other's good will, carried back to countless thousands of other Christian youth in all their homelands, will furnish the basis, for decades to come, of a strong peace party throughout the world.

XXII

A NEW STANDARD OF GREATNESS

THE question, Who are the really great? naturally arouses wide differences of opinion. It is not surprising that Jesus' standard of greatness is as revolutionary as anything in his religion, particularly when we study it against the background of the ancient world with its lack of idealism. It was the hey-day of kings, of absolute monarchs with authority over life and death. In such an age, to challenge the inherent greatness of men of wealth, of noble birth, of kingly authority and power, indicated rare independence of judgment and strength of character.

Few archæological expeditions in the history of scholarship have yielded more interesting results than the work done in recent years at the site of Ur of the Chaldees, by the joint expedition of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania, under the direction of Mr. C. Leonard Woolley. Perhaps their most sensational discovery was the extensive burial place of a queen of Ur who died about twenty-eight centuries before the Christian era. The most striking thing about it was not the exquisite goldsmith work on the queen's elaborate crown which had survived nearly fifty centuries quite un-

tarnished; but the fact that when she died, about a hundred of her retainers, both maids and men-at-arms, were sacrificed to the cult of royalty and buried with her in the same huge grave. These faithful servants were all given a strong lethal anæsthetic (the cups were all there still) as they lay at the feet of their dead queen; then all were buried alive. Mr. Woolley is of the opinion that they all died willingly; preferring to go on to the invisible world with their queen, whom they adored as a goddess, rather than to go on living in this life without her.

What a terribly false estimate of human greatness! Who was this person, whose death could claim the sacrifice of a hundred lives to convoy her into the future life? What elements of personal greatness could justify such a preposterous demand? What had she ever done to deserve such a tribute of absolute devotion? Probably nothing whatsoever. It was solely her position, purely an accident of birth and inherited royalty, that made her the pampered darling of the court while living, and its doom in the hour of her death, instead of one of the victims of this cruel custom. It is impossible to imagine the amount of human agony and abuse that is to be laid at the door of this ancient folly of glorifying royalty.

Contemporary estimates of greatness are proverbially wrong anyway. Tiberius Cæsar would have had the world's vote as the greatest living person in A.D. 29. The great ones in little Palestine would have been Herod and Pilate and the petty high

priests, persons whose very names would have been lost from history, had they not made themselves notorious by causing the death of a Galilean whom they all regarded as vastly beneath them!

"Speak History! Who are life's victors?

Unroll thy long annals and say.

Are they those whom the world called the victors,

Who won the success of a day?

The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans

Who fell at Thermopylae's tryst,

Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges

Or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?"¹

It took the vision of a seer to discern, through the murk of the first century, that the real hero of that generation, putting all others in deep shadow, was the Galilean martyr, Jesus Christ. He amply justified the unique honor of causing a redating of the calendar. But when in the year 63 the clear-sighted Paul, himself a Roman prisoner, dictated the following estimate of greatness, he was speaking of a man whose humble life, lived within a hundred-mile radius, had ended apparently in total eclipse and shame; and whose fame, a generation later, was limited to a few hundred scattered followers:

"Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."²

¹ W. W. Story, *Hymn to the Conquered*. ² Philippians 2:9-11.

The astonishing thing about it is, that St. Paul's estimate of greatness in this confident prophecy, which apparently had little to support it but a fervent faith, has been justified by the verdict of history. Though lacking every claim to greatness conferred by wealth, royalty, social standing or power, the name of Jesus Christ stands today, as Paul predicted, at the head of the world's roll of fame.

It is reasonable to claim then, that Jesus' own standard of greatness must be an accurate one, even though it was radically new. It is clear that he had no very high opinion of kings, though he was tactful enough to be discreet in his language. He makes a rather ironical reference to the luxuriousness of royalty, in contrast with John the Baptist whom he thoroughly admired and considered to be the greatest character he knew.³ When he himself was urged by his enthusiastic followers, at the height of his popularity to let them make him a king, he was not in the least interested.⁴ He quietly slipped away from the crowd at the first opportunity. When the two sons of Zebedee showed a foolish ambition for political greatness and begged for special honors in his coming kingdom, it aroused the indignation of their comrades. This gave Jesus occasion to teach them that real greatness is not in position, kingly authority, nor power, but in character and service:

"Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

³ Matthew 11:9.

⁴ John 6:15.

Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bond-servant." ⁵

He does not here question the right of the world's "great ones" to lord it over people if the people "dearly love a lord." Nor does he deny that it is greatness, of a superficial type. But greatness in his kingdom is no external matter of mere position, but a vital concern of real character. It is not a man's birth or blood or position that makes him great, but what he really is, and the spirit of service he shows in his life, in other words, the quality of his living. Herein is a challenge to all aristocracies.

This conception has surely been gaining acceptance in the world. So many crowns and thrones have been scrapped in the present generation, few kings remain. On the other hand, genuinely heroic service makes its inevitable appeal to us all. The first time the King of England talked over the radio to America, some one stumbled in the New York station of the National Broadcasting Company and accidentally severed the main reception cable, just as the King was beginning his speech. The manager in charge knew it would take ten minutes to make the repairs and by that time the speech would be over, and not a person in America would have heard a word of it. So he snatched up the sputtering ends of the live wire and held them together in his hands till the

⁵ Matthew 20:25-27.

King's speech was over; while the heavy electrical charge shook his body and seriously burned both hands. It was a great act, fully as kingly as the King's speech, and its greatness lay not in the grit and courage involved, so much as the ennobling desire to be of service to millions of listening and expectant Americans.

Jesus analyzed essential greatness even more radically. With daring challenge he taught the greatness of the humble heart. In humility there is potential greatness. All the truly great are unassuming, modest, humble. The following indictment of vainglorious pride, that follows his Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple, is a corollary to the third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek":

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *

Most of us feel the same instinctive dislike which Jesus evidently felt for a person who has an exalted idea of his own importance and takes himself too seriously. The superiority complex is fully as fatal to greatness as the inferiority complex. Great men have their foibles, as genius has its idiosyncrasies; but conceit will kill both popularity and greatness more quickly than any other corrosive. Jesus evidently considered it a sure sign of littleness when a person advertises himself and tries to lift himself by

* Luke 18:14.

the bootstraps to a position of honor, for the really great are humble-spirited and unassuming.

It is no mere coincidence that the word humility reminds so many of us of Abraham Lincoln. It is significant that his favorite poem was "Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" His career shows frequent evidence that this poem had profound influence upon his thinking. He was born humble; and unlike most men of humble origin, he stayed humble to the last. Possibly the humblest and least conspicuous member of the thirty-first Congress, he was comfortably seated in a rear-corner seat in the House; kept silent for two years, and was not re-elected. But only twelve years later he was returned to Washington, as President. Meanwhile the country had discovered, beneath the awkward exterior of an obscure Congressman, a greatness which has continued to grow ever since in the world's estimation. It is altogether likely that Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward of New York, was his superior in sheer ability as well as most aspects of culture, except humility. But Seward was too self-important ever to be great. Lincoln was too great to be proud.

The greatness of humility is certainly not a twentieth-century characteristic. So keen is the competition in business, high-pressure salesmanship has developed hectic efficiency in the art of advertising. With all the noise and blare and bluster of American

life, it takes the uproar of super-publicity to catch the public ear. To get in the limelight is the feverish endeavor of politicians, prize-fighters, struggling musicians, writers, and actors, especially movie actors, who are passionately seeking popular favor. Even if it takes a divorce every other year, or an unsuccessful attempt to fly the Atlantic, nothing is too reckless or costly a price to pay for the golden bauble of notoriety. Anything to gain headlines, even if it ruins reputation! If the Carpenter of Nazareth were living today in some remote village of New Jersey, we can imagine his trying as hard as Colonel Lindbergh to keep out of the papers.

Jesus advanced still further from the sophisticated world's ideal of greatness when he used the illustration of a little child to correct the false vision of his disciples who were dazzled by the world's bizarre estimate of greatness:

"And there arose a questioning among them, which of them was the greatest. But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child, and set him by his side, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me; for he that is least among you all, the same is great." ⁷

So his final word brings us to the point we reached in Chapter XIII when we discussed "the spiritual might of the childlike." Jesus' key to the kingdom of heaven is childlikeness. Greatness is the humility,

⁷ Luke 9:46-48.

the winsomeness, of teachable children; herein is capacity for infinite life.

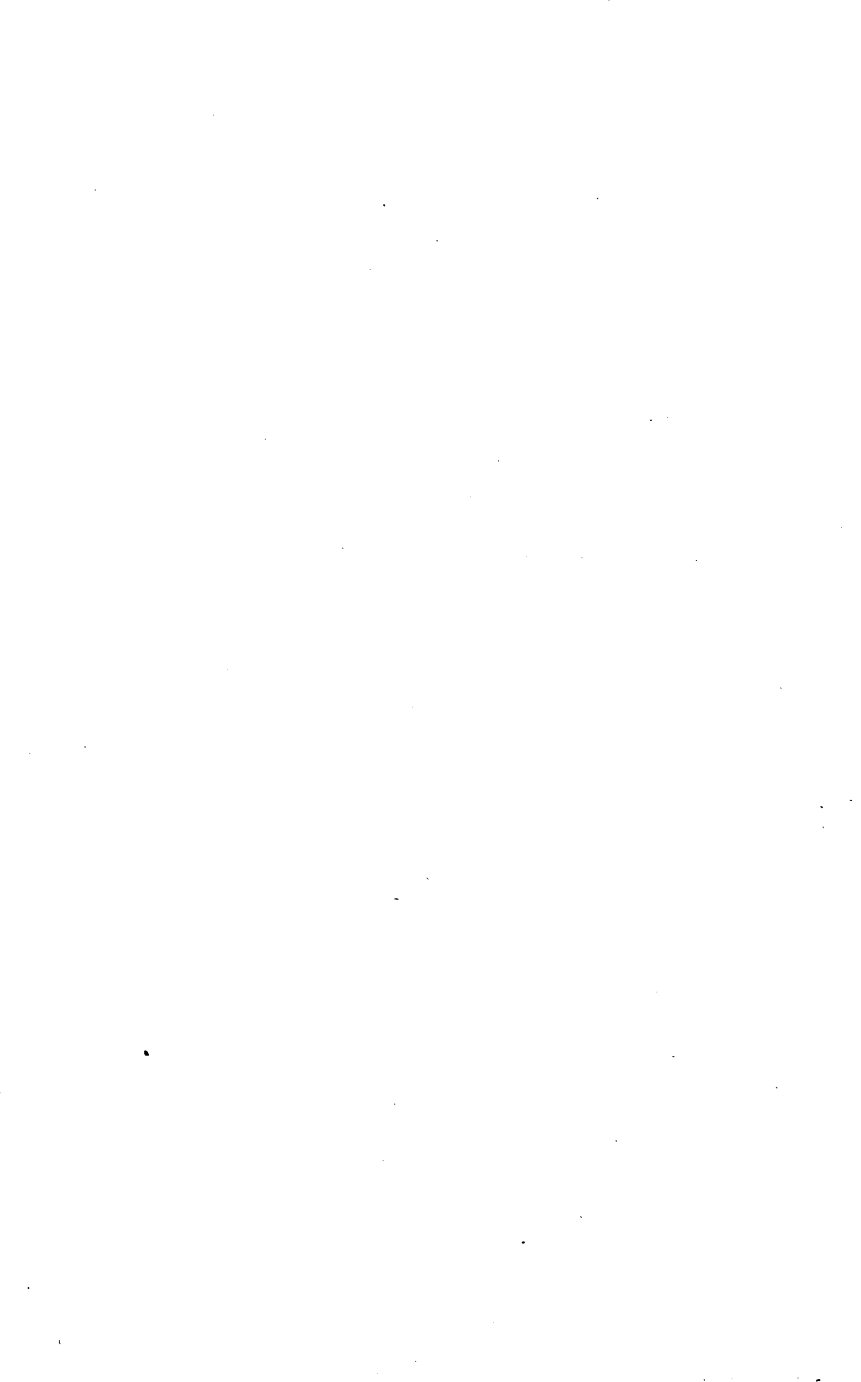
Beyond that word, Jesus has little to say about greatness, but he demonstrated it in the heroic climax of the Cross. His final note is the greatness of sacrifice. The culmination of his Beatitudes we found in the blessedness of martyrdom. Herein also is superlative greatness. The world's greatest have always been those who revealed the heights of character by suffering heroically for some great cause. Thus the Cross is the truest measure of greatness. *Greatness is heroic living*, even unto death.

The absolute bathos of pessimism, that the present author has ever discovered, was the reply of a reform-school boy, a premature cynic in middle teens, to the request on a questionnaire: "Name five of your heroes, living or dead." His response was: "There are no heroes." There never was a surplus of greatness, even in the age of Pericles. Heroes today are all too few. But the future will not be lacking in its call for greatness nor in its heroism. There will be less roar of artillery and brutal clashing of cavalry; but *the clashing of ideals will go on*; and this is the ultimate conflict and the final challenge. Heroes in the cause of social justice will still win the right to greatness. Great battles in forum, legislative halls, and boards of trade are yet to be fought, battles with corrupt politicians, with influential editors devoid of ideals, with grafting police in league with vice, with predatory chiefs of industry, with

selfish leaders of both labor and capital, and vested interests of every sort. Such battles will continue to challenge the heroism and test the greatness of the children of light. Knights of the Golden Rule are still needed to put into life the spirit of Jesus.

PART III

CREATIVE CONVICTIONS



XXIII

THE GOLDEN RULE IN FAMILY LIFE

ANOTHER realm of human experience in which the Carpenter of Nazareth showed his independence of thinking was in the family relation. Born into a race which honored the family more than any other people of antiquity, and whose reverence for family purity was notable, Jesus challenged the Jews by a still nobler ideal. Spiritual revolutionist as he was, he found a serious flaw in their family system. Quite likely he angered every *man* in Nazareth when he first expressed this revolutionary criticism of their sacred tradition!

The trouble with the family system, in Galilee and everywhere since Adam, was this: It was man-centered. The husband could divorce his wife at will, for the slightest cause or merest whim—"If she found no favor in his eyes."¹ He could write his "bill of divorcement" and cast her out of his home, before his anger cooled. It was his home, not hers. She owned not a stick of it; nothing, except her dowry. She was merely her husband's property. But for no reason whatsoever could she divorce him. Even if his conduct was so cruel she had to go to

¹ Deuteronomy 24:1.

civil authorities for protection, neither she nor they could divorce him. All they could do was to compel her husband to divorce her! Divorce was a purely domestic matter, and the husband, every husband, was the whole divorce court—judge, jury, witnesses, attorneys—his will was absolute law. The fact that the same injustice prevailed everywhere on earth made it no easier for the Jewish wife. She was not a legal person. She was only property. She was her husband's slave.

This fundamental injustice in the ancient world could not escape the penetrating eye of Jesus. The cynics doubtless said it was because he was not married himself. A truer reason was because he was the son of a mother, a remarkable mother, and he had a heightened spiritual imagination which enabled him to put himself in her place. By applying his inerrant scale of social justice, the Golden Rule, he discovered that every wife in Galilee was wrongly treated. By all the rights of personality, the family circle is not a circle at all, but an ellipse. Not a man-centered circle, but an ellipse with its two foci, the husband and the wife. For was not his gracious mother Mary a person? He seems to have been the first son in the world to discover it!

So we find that one of the most radical things Jesus ever did was to attack this whole man-made system of one-sided family life in which the woman had no rights. He challenged this male superiority-complex as unfair, with its resulting cruelties to

women. He declared that the rights of the two in marriage were equal. Notice in Mark he even dares suggest that it was conceivable for a woman to try to divorce her husband; though neither Matthew or Luke, in using Mark's earlier Gospel as one of their sources, ventured to quote it. The idea seemed too utterly radical to them! * It should not surprise us to find that with such an unjust system of divorce, domestic divorce in which the man is the whole court, Jesus should discard it altogether, as both Mark and Luke say he did, making no exception even for adultery. He was not thinking of judicial divorce; there was nothing of the sort in the world then. Whether he would as vigorously condemn a separation of an abused woman from her cruel husband, legalized by a modern court of justice after all personal rights involved had been impartially investigated, may well be questioned. We may be sure he would settle such a case on the basis of the rights of personality and every aspect of social justice involved.

It is evident that Jesus surprised and challenged his generation with a higher ideal of the marriage relation than they had ever imagined. So fundamentally had he thought it all through, he declared it to be an extension of the divine process of creation, and therefore a divine relationship. It is in essence not a contract, but a union, the merging of two lives in one. The union, once consummated, remains a

* Cf. Mark 10:11 w. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9; and Luke 16:18.

fact. The fact is, the husband and wife became one. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." What he would have said of a marriage which was evidently a blunder from the beginning; a case in which God obviously never had joined them together, but some justice of the peace, or marrying parson, one can only guess. His words on the subject are few. They do not discuss details, but only broad principles. In no other instance did Jesus set up specific rules for conduct. He could hardly have intended to do so here.

All that is clear is, Jesus sets before the world a perfect ideal for Christian marriage, a life-long, monogamous relationship involving a fusion of personalities and interests. The ideal is a superb one and millions of Christian families have lived up to it. It has meant for them a fusion of the physical, psychic and spiritual urges of their lives, and hence has resulted harmoniously with deep satisfactions for both parties involved. But the realizing of this ideal of Christ in its perfectness depends on whether the union was really one "which God hath joined together," and one which the spirit of love keeps true. It is obvious that the Golden Rule, constantly applying this spirit of love, has much to do with keeping the family relationship true to the noble ideals Jesus set for it.

The fact that Jesus himself never married made, unfortunately, too great an impression on the early church. It helped give color to the persistent idea

that celibacy was spiritually superior to the married state. Yet Jesus was never an ascetic, and never taught such an ideal of life. He was heroic rather than ascetic. His perfectly normal idea of marriage is revealed in these words: "From the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife." * Yet he never did so himself. To be sure he was only a little past thirty at his untimely death. In his Nazareth years he had doubtless postponed marriage because his widowed mother and her children needed his whole loyalty. We cannot be at all sure that he had decided never to marry. His rather cryptic words in Matthew 19:12 have led scholars to believe that it was "for the kingdom of heaven's sake" that he never assumed the responsibilities of marriage. It is tragic that his example has been followed so long, in one branch of his church, by a celibate clergy; but at least he sets no example of celibacy after the age of thirty-three.

Repeatedly he shows that he held the Kingdom to be above the claims of the family. To do God's will was his or any one else's highest duty; and family claims must yield to that. "No man who hath left house or brethren or mother or father, for the Gospel's sake but shall receive his reward." † The hyperbole in Luke's rendering has brought much criticism. But when Jesus challenged his followers

* Mark 10:6.

† Mark 10:29.

to "hate" their own relatives if they would become his disciples, this oriental hyperbole was only challenging their greater loyalty for the Kingdom, and suggesting the sacrifice of family joys it might involve.⁵

There is no finer product of the Christian faith than the Christian home at its best. The influence of Jesus and his high standard for family life is plainly seen throughout Christendom. There is a definite difference between the Christian and the pagan family. Yet the last generation, not only in America but in most of the world, has witnessed greater changes in family ideals than in most centuries before.

Our city and suburban families, with the recent popularity of new kitchenette apartments, have been losing their old home-centered life. The urban family has become centrifugal. With the vast enrichment of life, its diversified interests and high specialization, little is left of the old home functions. The new independence of women, thanks to their new political rights and their greater educational and industrial opportunities, has had inevitable effect upon the institution of the family.

The prosperous decade of the nineteen twenties greatly increased our facilities for pleasure and our temptation to self-indulgent living. An inevitable result was the "individualism run amuck" which caused an amazing increase in broken homes. Though

⁵ Luke 14:26.

affecting slightly the Christian population of the country, the divorce statistics have shown an unprecedented increase. By 1931 they had reached the astonishing ratio of one divorce to six marriages, or probably about one to three in the non-Christian half of the population. The ratio in Japan is only one divorce to fifteen marriages. Since the sobering days of depression, there has been a sharp decline in the number of marriages and an even greater decrease in divorces.

How radically the social ideals of the American family meanwhile have changed is apparent to all thoughtful people. Though the sensational discussion of "companionate marriage" has largely passed, and even the term is now seldom heard, it unquestionably left in its wake a strong challenge to the permanence of marriage. The idea of trial marriage is widespread among us. There is an increasing demand for the legalizing of divorce by mutual consent, as in Norway, or even at the will of either party, as in Russia. The thought of marriage as discipline and mutual sacrifice for the sake of a family has given way to self-indulgence and a life of selfish individualism and pleasure.

No wonder in such a situation our great denominations have discovered greater need than ever for reasserting the lofty ideals of Jesus for the purity and permanence of the Christian family. For several years past the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America has maintained a special Commission on

Marriage and the Home, that has made continuous and intensive study of this problem and has from time to time issued reports and appeals to its great constituency to maintain the stabilizing influence of religion in the homes of the land. Without doubt the best insurance against broken homes is family religion. The only way to stop the trend toward pagan, self-indulgent homes, is to keep our Christian families loyal to the spirit and ideals of Jesus. Only religion furnishes a strong, enduring basis of ethics in the very character of God. It supplies the noblest ideals as standards of conduct; but it also injects the spiritual motive power to realize these ideals and to put them into life.

This spiritual power in religion, which no other human experience can furnish, comes from a vital relation with God. It is no empty phrase to say that the Christian family depends on God's help for its stability, its continuance, as well as its happiness. The tests of patience, mutual forbearance and love in the family relationships are many and varied; but the Master has reduced every domestic emergency to the uniform challenge of the Golden Rule. As long as our genuine love keeps us considerate of each other, so that we do not fail to treat others in the home as we ourselves would be treated, so long the family craft with its precious freight rides every storm.

The outstanding point in Jesus' teaching about the family is his visualizing the coming kingdom of

God's good will, as simply an extension of family limits to include all the children of God. As we showed in Chapter III, this conception of the Kingdom was really involved in his discovery of God's Fatherhood. In picturing the ideal men and women in an ideal world, he could think of no better description than to feature them in family terms. They would simply be like brothers and sisters in their Father's house. "And looking around on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." *

We have seen repeatedly, in our study of various aspects of Jesus' own religion, how deeply this ideal of the Kingdom is involved in all his conceptions of human duty. We owe it to each other, in all possible social relationships in life, in business, politics or religion, to treat one another as brothers. Jesus saw clearly that this would solve all social problems. As fast as the kindly feelings of the family, the mutual love, confidence and kindness of brothers, reach out into business relations and dominate human attitudes and decisions there, this brotherliness resolves the puzzling problems and inequalities of industry. Likewise in politics and even the complex tangles of inter-racial and world issues. The fine art of living is learned, on the small scale, in the human family. The same fine art, and the same brotherly

* Mark 3:34, 35.

kindness, is involved on the grand scale in all the wider circles of mutual responsibility in the great world outside the home. Can the Golden Rule and the law of love be made to work their miracles of kindness in these larger ranges of human social living? Exactly that is the modern world's challenge to the religion of Jesus.

XXIV

THE GOLDEN RULE AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

WE have reached the point in our discussion of the religion of Jesus where radical difference of opinion is inevitable. We have found that his ideals for life in the kingdom of God were at many points revolutionary. He boldly challenged the world's standards of righteousness, of happiness, of greatness, of labor and service, of the potency of kindness, and the worth of a human life. But the point where modern life finds him most revolutionary is in this matter of possessions. So sensitive is the pocket-nerve of many Christians, they resent even the mention of this chapter of the teachings of Jesus as a part of his religion or having anything to do with ours.

The widest cleavage between Protestants today is not between Methodists and Presbyterians, or Lutherans and Baptists. Differences in ideas and opinions are not so serious. Practical differences are closer to the issues of life. Social cleavages are much more divisive than doctrinal disputes. All is quiet now on the Fundamentalist front. The big cleavage now is between social religion and "the simple gospel;" and the most challenging point in the social religion

of Jesus is where it impinges upon the burning questions of economics that affect intimately the convictions and prejudices of every modern Christian. The historic conflict between the religion of the priest and the religion of the prophet, that has rent synagogues and churches in twain ever since the prophet Amos, and which crucified the Christ, is still with us in all its intolerant passion. On this issue of money and property, as we have already seen, Jesus was not silent. The prophetic note of social justice was the open diapason of his religion.

To be sure, our brethren who prefer to consider Jesus' social teachings "only ethics," and not a part of his religion, take much comfort in quoting his answer to the appeal of a certain stingy brother to settle the family quarrel over their patrimony:

"But Jesus said unto him, Man, who made me a referee or a divider over you? Watch out and be on your guard against covetousness, for a man's real life is not made up of the surplus things that he possesses."¹

This is a clear warning that Jesus makes no claim, and gives us no warrant, to try to settle dogmatically the details of financial or industrial differences. But the same reference proves how inextricably, in Jesus' mind, these two deepest human interests, economics and religion, are entangled. He refused to settle the man's paternal estate for him, but he immediately gave him a fundamental principle of religion

¹ Luke 12:14. (Author's translation.)

controlling the distribution of wealth. He had known so many men whose religion was ruined by their greed for gold, it seemed a very vital religious matter to "beware of covetousness, for a man's real life consists not in material goods."

There is a popular misconception that to slight Jesus' message on such mundane matters as money is a mark of the spiritually minded Christian. This is not true to the facts. As we noted in Chapter XVII, one of the most earnestly spiritual of living Christians is the great Japanese leader, Doctor Kagawa. Yet he tells us, "Economics and religion are not separate, but one. To live a life, and live up to a life, is economics and it is religion." He had lived much with the poor and knew how poverty damns life. And he has suffered for his social faith. In former days he was repeatedly arrested and thrown into prison for preaching and practicing the social religion of Jesus; until finally the government discovered in this gentle apostle of the Nazarene, Japan's best champion of liberalism against radical communism. Kagawa's deeply spiritual faith finds practical outlet in his "Kingdom of God Movement," and a part of it, inevitably, is the application of the Golden Rule to the problems of money, property, and human relations in industry. As a result he is loved and trusted by countless city laboring men and oppressed farmers and has great influence with both groups.

There is a more widespread conviction that Jesus

really has a vital message for our economic problems today, than is generally admitted. It makes many Christians uneasy in conscience; and this unrest of late has been growing acute. Sometimes it results in muzzling the minister. Sometimes the minister, with the social conscience of an Isaiah, refuses to be muzzled. A Wall Street broker has been recently reported as facing this matter very honestly and sending this remarkable letter, with his annual check, to the pastor of the church of which he has long been a member:

"I am not coming to church any longer. I will continue to pay my subscription, because I believe that the ideals of life that you are preaching are those of final validity. But I cannot live according to those ideals and remain in my business. Therefore I intend to protect myself against adding to the inner tension which already distracts me, by spending my Sundays somewhere else than in your congregation."

It was an honest admission of his inability to be consistent, and a high tribute to the convincing power of Jesus' social religion. Yet how much such a pathetic decision reminds us of the rich young ruler who was strongly drawn to Christ, but made the great refusal!

The message of Jesus on these fundamental matters of Christian living cannot be consistently disregarded. We shall therefore face them frankly in our next three chapters, though the treatment is necessarily brief. The simple reason why the social

ethics of money and property must be considered a part of the Christian religion is because Jesus' religion includes love for one's neighbor. That love can be proved only by Golden Rule living; and in no realm of human relations is the Golden Rule more constantly tested or more grievously needed than in this field of industry and the goods of life. The surprisingly large space given relatively to these matters in the first three Gospels shows how vital they are to the religion of Jesus.

As Jesus' religion grew, out of his daily experience, he soon learned that life is more than property, and that mere things never made any one permanently happy. Standing on the sidelines he watched the obstacle-race for gold, an endurance race which never stops, and marveled at its mad fury. What was gained, after all, by the victors? He saw so many poor rich men, and so many rich poor men, it was clear to him that the great god Gold is only a delusive tyrant. So his first word on the subject is "Beware of covetousness." Strange, come to think of it, how few people worry over the Tenth Commandment! Yet covetousness is the vice and the curse of both the poor and the rich, especially the former; and Jesus was talking to poor folks. To teach his friends the sheer folly of trusting in wealth for happiness he told them this story of the only man he ever called a fool:

"A certain rich man had a very fertile farm, and he debated with himself saying: 'What am I to do? For I have

no more room to store my crops.' Then he said to himself, 'This is what I'll do. I'll pull down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and in them I'll store all my harvest and my good things. And I'll say to myself: "Soul, you have many goods laid by for many a year. Take your ease, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself."'

"But God said to him: 'Poor fool! This very night your soul is demanded of you. Then all these preparations—whose shall they be?' So it is when a man selfishly amasses treasures; but has no treasure in heaven." ³

What a fool! Everything invested in barns. Nothing invested in heaven. Hoarding his wealth just for his own selfish comfort, surely he was as poor that night as a man could possibly be, when his naked soul went to meet his God. It was such cases as that—Jesus doubtless knew many of them—that led him to warn people not to hoard their wealth, but to lay up permanent treasure in heaven:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." ⁴

There are many who think this passage means that Jesus was opposed to all thrift and forbade all investments. If so, it would hopelessly conflict with his other teachings on the subject. Considering all of these together, it must be he was here warning us against the *hoarding* of wealth, and its consequent

³ Luke 12:16-21. (Author's translation.) ⁴ Matthew 6:19-21.

loss by rust or theft; not its reasonable use for the welfare of men. Wealth should be made useful here on earth, and the spiritual riches of character be made permanently useful in heaven. This is exactly the message of the Parable of the Talents, in which he vigorously scores the unprofitable servant who merely hoarded his talent, keeping it safe but useless; and then praises the wise investments of the thrifty stewards who made their money useful.⁶ It is to be noted that he specifically approved banks and the principle of money making money at interest, though the Old Testament law forbade Jews to charge each other interest.⁶

The great moral dangers inherent in riches Jesus clearly understood. That is why he warns us against covetousness. The love of money easily becomes an absorbing slavery which turns the heart to gold. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon,"⁷ because love of money kills out both love for God and fellow men. The inhumanity of man to man is chiefly due to gold. So vastly has the power of wealth increased, the great temptations and the great sins of the modern age are mostly connected with money-making. Better than ever in the past we can understand Jesus' meaning when he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" A moment later he explained his sensational statement thus:

⁶ Matthew 25:14-29.

⁷ Matthew 6:24.

⁶ Deuteronomy 23:19, 20.

"Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." *

This is to be taken as literally impossible; not toned down to refer to a non-existent "gate"! For he added, "With men it is impossible, but not with God. For with God all things are possible." Riches can never save a man, as was then commonly believed, for wealth was supposed to be a proof of God's favor. If God saves a wealthy man it is in spite of his riches, not because of them.

In the narrative of the rich young ruler, that preceded this teaching of Jesus, the Master's fear of the moral dangers of wealth is strikingly in evidence. He was greatly drawn to that attractive young ruler. He admired his enthusiasm, his piety, his high character. But perhaps it was his luxurious clothing that stamped him as a self-indulgent youth who was really a Mammon-worshiper. So Jesus advised him to get out from under the burden of his gold that was crushing his spiritual life. "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven: and come, follow me." His wealth was a hindrance to his soul. Yet he gave no such advice to his rich friend, Zaccheus. Why? Because the penitent publican, by restoring his graft four fold, gave ample proof that the money-god no longer ruled him. His religion had conquered his

* Mark 10:24, 25.

avarice. But Jesus' suspicion of the young ruler was justified. We see that his avarice actually stifled his religion. Verily it is impossible for such a man to enter the Kingdom, save by the powerful grace of God, conquering his avarice.

This brings us to the most fundamental question about property. Must a Christian be a communist? This involves not simply the problem of whether or not Jesus was a communist in the first century; but the question of whether his principle of human relations, the Golden Rule, requires communal ownership, or allows individual ownership of property today. The Fourth Gospel is not interested in property at all, and the other Gospels say little about ownership. So far as the disciples shared the common eschatological expectation of the speedy end of the age, they took little interest in the subject. John Mark owned a house,⁹ and probably Simon Peter and the Bethany family where Jesus was often a guest. When the group traveled they were trustful enough to use for convenience a common purse and Judas was the treasurer.¹⁰ Luke tells us that several women traveled with them, including Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna, who evidently had some income, for "they ministered unto them of their substance."¹¹ The physical needs of the group were very limited, for life then was exceedingly simple and easily sustained.

Probably the least of Jesus' worries was property.

⁹ Acts 12:12.

¹⁰ John 12:6.

¹¹ Luke 8:3.

He evidently owned nothing but his clothing and cared for nothing more, after he became a traveling teacher. He was anxious neither about food nor raiment, so implicit was his trust in God. Yet he did not expect others to give up their homes and property as he had done. He had warm friends among both rich and poor, and though he bitterly condemned the unjust rich, he never condemned the rich because they were rich, nor denied their moral right to own property. So far as his teachings are concerned it cannot be claimed that Jesus was either a communist or a socialist, though both are fond of claiming him:

"Thanks to Saint Matthew who had been
At mass-meetings in Palestine,
We know whose side was spoken for
When Comrade Jesus had the floor.

"Where sore they toiled and hard they lie,
Among the great unwashed dwell I—
The tramp, the convict, I am he;
Cold-shoulder him, cold-shoulder me.'

"Ah, let no local him refuse!
Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.
Whatever others be debarred,
Comrade Jesus hath his red card."¹²

But the chief reason why Jesus cannot be claimed as a socialist is because he and they differ absolutely

¹² Sarah N. Cleghorn. From "Comrade Jesus," in *The Masses*. Published in 1913 by Henry Holt & Co., and quoted with permission of author.

about wealth. They consider it the chief good, without which there can be no millennium. Jesus considers it the chief hindrance to the higher life. The socialist paradise is not the heaven of Jesus, there is too much selfishness in it. His complete sympathy for the poor, their sufferings of both body and spirit, their heritage of social injustice, their meagerness of opportunity, is all that any social radical could possibly desire. But our modern socialism and communism are both too materialistic and too much tainted with group selfishness to escape the condemnation of Jesus. He shows no desire to abolish wealth. His anxiety is to make sure that spiritual things, not wealth, are put first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."¹⁸ But communism exactly reverses this order. In their craze for equality of wealth, their practical worship of Mammon, the communists put the things of the spirit second, a very poor second.

Naturally, although the communists find little comfort in the Gospels to sustain their claim to Jesus, they point with pride to the picture of the simple fellowship of the Jerusalem church in the book of the Acts. There was apparently a strong expectation of Jesus' speedy return to set up his spiritual kingdom. This was intensified by repeated visions of his actual presence. Consequently some of his original hundred and twenty followers gave up

¹⁸ Matthew 6:33.

their separate homes and found inspiration and great joy in sharing a communal life:

"And all that believed were together, and they had all things in common; and they sold all their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need."¹⁴

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common . . . and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need."¹⁵

Only two instances, however, of such sale of lands and sharing of proceeds are reported. One was the case of Joseph, surnamed Barnabas because of his generosity; and the other the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Obviously, in that company of simple Jerusalem Christians, most of them with meager possessions, there was little property to share, and what sharing of possessions there was, was *purely voluntary*.¹⁶ Furthermore, their experiment can hardly be quoted as successful communism, even if it was communism at all, for within a short time the Christian community at Jerusalem was so poor they had to be aided by the special charitable gifts of the Pauline churches in Greece and Asia Minor.

However, the echo of a single phrase in that narra-

¹⁴ Acts 2:44, 45.

¹⁵ Acts 4:32-35.

¹⁶ Acts 5:4.

tive in the Acts still lingers in the ears of the Christian world: "Not one of them called aught of the things which he possessed his own." They did not feel like claiming absolute ownership of this world's goods, when they saw their brother in need, for he had a just claim on them. This was their interpretation of that austere challenge of Jesus, reported by Luke: "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."¹⁷ He was carefully sifting the multitude mentioned in that chapter (vs. 25) to secure a few followers on whom he might depend. They must have an undivided loyalty.

To draw the conclusion from this special situation that no Christian in any future age could ever hold property would be quite unwarranted. But the Greek original of that word "renounceth" has a challenge in it which still holds. It means "separate one's self from," and "renounce allegiance to," thus recalling that swift, sharp assertion of the Master's "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The Christian therefore in any age will not be dominated by his gold. He will not be so entangled by his property he cannot see his duty clearly nor act disinterestedly. Nor will he claim his possessions "in fee simple," with no moral responsibilities entailed. Ownership, for the Christian, is not only privilege but responsibility. His talents are all God's gifts, to be held in trust. He is God's trustee, and in meeting every

¹⁷ Luke 14:33.

trust he will keep human rights, not property rights, first.

In discussing Christ's attitude toward wealth and property rights, then, we have discovered certain principles in his religion that are so fundamental as to be forever true. It was evident that the disciples' expectation of his speedy return, with a cataclysm which would establish the new age and destroy the old, created a special situation which gave them little interest in holding property. But that had little or no effect upon Jesus' clear insight into permanent ethical values or the effect of wealth upon character and spiritual welfare. The spirit and attitude of Jesus on this important aspect of human experience may be fairly stated in these fundamental principles:

1. The possession of surplus material goods is a spiritual handicap.
2. It is folly and delusion to trust in wealth for happiness.
3. The pursuit of wealth as an end in itself is spiritually dangerous.
4. Wealth should not be hoarded but put to profitable use.
5. Spiritual values and human rights are above property rights.
6. Wealth need not be abolished nor communized; but must be used to develop character and serve society.
7. There is no absolute ownership for a Christian. He holds his wealth in trust as a moral responsibility to God and society.

These general principles will find special application in our modern age, not in accordance with any

specific ancient rules, too age-marked to be permanent; but through careful use of the perennial Golden Rule, in specific situations. In general, a Christian who accepts these principles of the Master could not so amass property as to deprive his neighbor of his fair share of the goods of life, for the Golden Rule would bar the way. The Golden Rule demands fair distribution of the goods of life, so as neither to deprive the poor of necessities, and a fair share of all good things; nor to handicap the children of the rich by the moral dangers of wealth.

That this point of fair and reasonable distribution has never been reached in this country is notoriously true. The increasing concentration of wealth since the world war constitutes the greatest social menace both to our peace and to the survival of our civilization. It cannot go on without serious danger. According to federal government report there were, in 1928, 38,650 millionaires in this country, of whom no less than 504 had incomes of over \$1,000,000 a year. Of these, thirty-six persons had over \$5,000,000 a year income, and their average income was almost twice that. Never before had one per cent of the property owners held one-third of our total wealth; and ten per cent owned 64% of it all, leaving only 36% of the nation's property to the remaining 90% of the people, most of whom owned nothing at all. In the following year, 1929, the reports show that although the total income of the country was sufficient to support everybody fairly comfortably, on

an average income of \$3,745 per family, there was even greater inequality than before. There were 511 incomes of from one to eighty millions each, and 15,780 with incomes of over \$100,000. About one million citizens who had over \$5,000 a year took some nineteen billion dollars of the national income. There were 23,100,000 families with incomes below \$5,000; most of them much below that; so that 82% of the total population had too small incomes to pay any income tax at all.

The Bureau of Economic Research reports that the average earnings of all wage earners attached to industries, in 1927, the peak of our prosperity, amounted only to \$1,205, and the income of many millions fell below that figure; not to mention millions of our poorer farmers who had to live on half that sum. In an absolute monarchy or under a dictatorship this condition might continue indefinitely; but it simply cannot last in a social democracy where the masses wield the franchise. Such unjust distribution of wealth constitutes in itself the greatest menace to the present industrial system. It is playing directly into the hands of the extreme social radicals.

To be sure the last two years of depression have greatly reduced these figures. There are now fewer millionaires by many thousands. But it is doubtful if there is any better distribution, for everybody has suffered, rich and poor, and the average income has fallen proportionately; while more than seven millions of wage earners have no income at all. Un-

questionably the will of the majority will ultimately limit excess fortunes by taxation, thus forcing redistribution. Swollen fortunes will somehow be either prevented or taxed out of existence. This is probably the only way to avoid revolution; certainly the only way to give the capitalistic system a chance to rehabilitate itself. This was the dominant note in the Labor Day Message last fall issued by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Any one who thinks this is not a matter which should interest the churches should turn to his Bible and read the fiery passage about tainted money in the last chapter of the Epistle of James, written by the brother of Jesus. The religion of brotherly love must include economic ethics.

XXV

THE GOLDEN RULE AND INDUSTRY

THE good sportsmanship of the Golden Rule is demanded in industry and business more insistently than in any other realm of human interest. Chauchard, the proprietor of the world-famous *Grands Magazins du Louvre*, the great department store in Paris, died in 1909 leaving an estate of \$20,000,000. He had promised his 8,000 clerks one-fourth of his property for helping him make his vast profits. But it was promptly discovered that his will gave them but a mere pittance each, though his elaborate bronze coffin cost \$100,000, and his shroud was of cloth of gold. His solemn funeral procession, from the popular church of the Madeleine, was turned into a carnival of mockery and contempt by the hundreds of thousands of people who lined the streets as the plumed catafalque passed along to the cemetery. Everywhere it was greeted by whistles, shouts of derision, hisses, shrieking catcalls and contemptuous motor horns; an outburst of deadly mob hatred whose execration the police of Paris were powerless to check. When workers after giving their best have

failed to receive fair treatment, they bitterly resent it, especially when a broken promise is involved.

We do not expect to find Jesus technically informed about the details of modern merchandising, or coal-mining, nor the making of silk, steel, or cotton cloth. He would therefore not presume to dictate a wage scale for Passaic, Pittsburgh, North Carolina, or West Virginia. Nor shall we find in his teachings a specific maximum for their respective dividends. Nor does he tell us the point where Christian interest becomes pagan usury. Such things go without saying. But if it is possible to *humanize industry*; if it is not inherently a constant fight between inevitable enemies, but can be made a coöperative relationship on friendly terms; then the Nazarene Carpenter has something to say about the matter. If the spirit that was in Christ Jesus cannot make peace in this long human struggle, the war will continue to the end.

The economics of Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard have often been ridiculed.¹ Paying the full day's wage, in a time of unemployment, to laborers who were hired late in the day, has been called everything from simply quixotic to unjust. Obviously the man hired at the eleventh hour, after waiting in discouragement all day for a chance to work, was paid not on the basis of service but of simple need. It was sheer generosity, not economics. Jesus merely claimed for the owner of the vineyard the right to be humane

¹ Matthew 20:1-16.

if he wished. And a Christian people have found it necessary, in this year of our Lord 1932, to be generous to the unemployed, millions of them, whether they work an hour a day or none at all. But we do not call it economics, nor do we load the burden on the individual employer; though no less an economist than Mr. Roger Babson has suggested this very thing recently: "A simple remedy," said he, "would be to *quota* the unemployed among employers and those already employed."²

Let us not too quickly conclude that the fellow workmen would consider themselves unfairly treated if others with greater need received the larger wage, as in Jesus' parable. That humanely conducted corporation, the Columbia Conserve Company of Indianapolis, has a shop committee of employees which sometimes adjusts wages to meet special family emergencies. A faithful employee whose aged father had to stop work was faced with the necessity for charity aid, for food for her father and mother, unless her own wage might be increased. So she reported the facts to this shop committee and modestly asked for a three-dollar-a-week increase. While she was wondering whether they would think it excessive, they reported promptly as follows: "Three dollars more a week is not enough to take care of your father and mother. We have decided that you should be paid eight dollars more a week." The

² Roger W. Babson, "A Quota Plan for Restoring Business to Normal," in *The Congregationalist*, July 14, 1932, p. 905. Quoted with publisher's permission.

increased wage was paid her; by vote of her own fellow workers.*

Who says industry is necessarily warfare? The same type of minds that consider war necessary occasionally in civilization. But the Christ mind says "Put up thy sword" and "Blessed are the peacemakers." This applies in industry as well as war. Selfish materialism that values only material goods will naturally do its best to keep industry on the war basis. Selfish employers and selfish workmen will continue to fight each other and the public, as viciously as two dogs fighting over a bone. But such an idea of industry is below the human level. Human welfare, not simply wealth, is the goal of industry, or it is still in the feudal system, and not yet civilized. Jesus, with his strong emphasis on human values as paramount to property values, would insist on this. It is simply selfishness which has complicated matters in the working world; each party in the partnership trying to over-reach the other and seize more than its share of the product of the common enterprise.

Signor Mussolini in a public address in Rome not long ago said, "No greater mistake could be made than to represent capital and labor as necessarily opposed principles. On the contrary each completes the other. One cannot do without the other, so they must perforce come to understanding." Not only

* W. H. Hapgood, *An Experiment in Industrial Democracy* (pamphlet).

that, but both must consider the rights of the public, the innocent bystander in many an unnecessary fight between capital and labor. The public is at last demanding a disarmament conference in industry and the end of the long warfare. On a normal peace basis, industry is found to be a natural coöperation between five great forces: the financial power of capital, the brain power of management, the physical and personal power of labor, the mechanical power of machinery and, greater than them all, without which they would all be helpless, the purchasing power of the public. Four of these factors are personal forces. The success of the common enterprise depends on their mutual good will.

If Jesus had nothing to say in the world of modern industry but his Golden Rule and his social principle of the worth of personality, that would be guidance enough, to humanize business. If human life and welfare must be considered above chattels, then Christians who had to quit their slaveholding on Jesus' account, must also quit thinking of free labor as a "commodity," a thing that is bought and sold. Labor is neither a commodity nor a machine; it is personal force, it is soul, it is human personality. That is, the worker is a brother man; he must be treated as such. Doubtless Jesus' first criticism of modern business would be that capital and management try to hide behind an impersonal corporation and then are too apt to treat the laborer impersonally. His religion tested at the carpenter's bench

found it quite possible to keep all business affairs on the personal basis of mutual service and mutual good will. Complicating our modern industry has not made this impossible. It has merely made it difficult. The Golden Rule in business requires full recognition of the rights of all persons involved. Will it mean that a living comfort-wage must be the first charge against industry? That looks decidedly Christian; though we must not forget that dividends also are the claims of persons. But in weighing the priority of the claims of wages and of dividends, we face the fact that the wage is usually the laborer's whole living. Is this equally true of the stockholder's dividend?

Fairness compels us to admit that when industry is kept on the feudal basis, there is about as much unreasonable greed on one side as the other. Jesus taught the Golden Rule, not the Tinsel Rule nor the Brazen Rule. (See Chapter XV.) The claims of union labor are often preposterous. John Graham Brooks tells us of a Sicilian workman of his acquaintance who confessed he had never earned in Italy more than thirty cents a day, usually less. Coming to Boston he began at \$1.25. In a year he was earning twice that, and since then a great deal more, after mastering our language. Of course he has more and better food and clothes. He says with pride, "It is a new kind of man I now dress!" Yet he joined the communists, and likes to call capitalism "the new slavery." He claims that capital takes four

dollars out of every five dollars he earns; and therefore labor must set itself free by "taking the place of the robbers!"⁴

On the other hand, management often uses its superior power to pay higher dividends than justice to the workers warrants. For instance, in the panic year of 1930, when business was not profitable, would the Christ mind have paid dividends out of surplus, in the face of falling wages and growing unemployment? That was exactly what American business did. Instead of reducing dividends, thus playing fair with both labor and the public, the industrial and railway corporations of America paid out in dividends \$318,600,000 more than in the prosperous year of 1929, according to the Standard Statistics Company. Meanwhile actual wage-payments decreased twenty per cent. It is plain that these dividends had to be paid largely out of accumulated surplus.

It is this sort of information which, of course, cannot be kept private, that arouses indignation in the labor world. Naturally there is greater social injustice in trades where the workers are poorly organized. In the year 1925 the profits of four great chain stores selling cheap articles totaled over fifty million dollars. Their stockholders received dividends that year averaging thirty-five per cent on the par value of the stock; while eighty per cent of the employees

⁴ J. G. Brooks, *Labor's Challenge to the Social Order*, p. 118.

were paid less than twelve dollars a week.⁵ It is futile as well as false to claim that this is nobody's business except "the parties involved." Everybody is involved, for if this industrial injustice continues, the patience of the public as well as of organized labor will be exhausted and we shall have industrial revolution. Capital and business management should understand that they are doing more than all "the Reds" in America to make such a catastrophe imminent.

It is plain to see that there is another common practice of our capitalistic system that Jesus would surely criticize. We have inherited from the ancient "common law" of Saxon England, on which our own business law is based, the custom of protecting "the sacred rights of property" before personal rights. This legal principle has led our corporation magnates instinctively to protect business rather than labor. All thrifty corporations have always planned to build up surplus reserves, in times of prosperity, to protect the business when hard times come. But how many corporations have made similar plans to protect the interests of labor? Would the Christ, who demands that we put human rights above property rights, condone such a custom as this? It is significant that one of the sharpest arraignments of modern industry for this unfair custom has recently

⁵ See C. V. Burns, *The Master's Message to the New Age*, p. 175.

come from the racial descendants of the prophets Amos and Micah, the Commission on Social Justice of the Central Conference of American Rabbis:

"We serve notice, in the name of the most priceless spiritual possession of man, the sanctity of the human soul, that religion has naught but bitter condemnation for any economic order which, like our present one, again and again places concern for property above concern for human life, and leaves millions of lives as wreckage in the mad scramble for material wealth. There is nothing sacred in the present order, and unless it can place itself more in accord with the fundamental principles of ethical conduct, we forecast for it that same inevitable and inexorable doom as did the great prophets of our people, in another day to another blind and callous generation. . . . Surely a sound and dignified program of unemployment insurance need not be urged as morally superior to the present disgraceful yet necessary makeshifts of alms and soup-kitchens. *We protect capital by dividend reserves. Is capital more sacred than human life?*"^o

How much this sounds like the Master of Nazareth's own voice! When Jews of the modern day talk like that, surely Christians should greet their message with hearty approval. It is not surprising that church after church, in their state and national assemblies, has in the past two years given utterance to similar demands for a humanizing and Christianizing of industry. The Pittsburgh Methodist Conference a year ago, after referring to certain practices of industrial corporations, said:

^o See *The World Tomorrow*, November, 1931, p. 343.

"It is time for the Church which represents the Man who died for men to serve notice upon these buccaneers of business that it cannot offer shelter to such practices; and that dazzling subscriptions to charity and church budgets are not an atonement for the denial of the simple requirements of honesty, justice, and love."

It was in this same tone of severe disapproval that the Master pronounced woes upon the hypocrites of his day who were punctilious in their petty tithing, but "left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy and faith." ⁷

We now have between eight and nine million unemployed workers in our country and practically no provision in our industrial system for this sudden catastrophe; although seventeen other countries with more forethought have systems of unemployment insurance. This failure to establish reserves for our workers, except in a few humanized industries, is seen to be a calamitous blunder. It has been due to a false and unchristian attitude toward labor.

We are forced now to revise our estimate of the "living wage" which all acknowledge is the worker's due. Heretofore we have interpreted it as a sufficient sum to secure life's necessities *during the period of actual labor*. That is manifestly not enough. He is not paid a living wage unless the wage is sufficient for unemployment insurance to cover the living costs of his family during years of depression as well as the years of plenty. Our peace army of skilled

⁷ Matthew 23:23.

workers is a mighty factor in the nation's assets. Without these millions of producers our industries and farms would be helpless and useless. Yet as soon as widespread unemployment comes we treat them as social liabilities and objects of charity. We shall not be treating labor and the public as well as we treat capital until we establish an adequate system of stabilization of employment. If civilization is to continue, on "the American scale of living," this will have to come. It will, of course, be very expensive; but it will develop a more self-respecting and coöperative force of workmen and an infinitely fairer society. Many business executives say it is quite impossible. It will be possible only by eliminating the excess profits of "stock dividends" and "extra dividends" and the super-salaries and bonuses paid to executives. The public are now paying an enormous penalty for these luxuries. In other words, so long as the profit motive remains paramount, neither the public nor the producers can be treated as the Golden Rule demands. All profiteering and exploiting must go. *Business will not be humanized until the service motive is given first place, and the profit motive second.* Until this is done, we shall continue to have unemployment cycles with the pathetic call of our brother men for work:

"They ask but the right to labor, and to live by the strength
of their hands,
They who have bodies like knotted oaks and patience like
the sea sands.

And the right of a man to labor, and his right to labor in joy,
Not all your laws can strangle that right, nor the gates of hell destroy;
For it came with the making of man and was kneaded into his bones,
And it will stand at the last of things on the dust of crumbled thrones." *

The Southern Baptists are possibly the most conservative of churches. For them to take a liberal stand on the question of social religion is a sign of the times. In a recent report of the social service commission of the Georgia Baptist convention we read this same conviction that all the liberal churches have been expressing:

"Unfortunately business is so organized as to give greater security to investors than to wage earners, the greater emphasis being upon the security of property. Reserves are commonly set aside in the good years for the payment of dividends, but no such reserves have been set aside to stabilize the workers' income."

This about makes it unanimous. The Christian consciousness of the country is interpreting the spirit of Christ as demanding that we guarantee to every worthy, self-respecting brother man a fair share of all good things. The present writer is neither socialist nor communist, because he believes both systems are essentially materialistic and selfish; and because

* Edwin Markham, in *Shoes of Happiness and Other Poems*, p. 126. Doubleday, Page & Co., publishers. Quoted with the permission of the author, owner of copyright.

he is sure the governmental ownership and control of industry, at least in this country, would be inefficient, wasteful, and graft-ridden. But we fear that there will soon take place a mighty swing away from capitalism to some sort of social radicalism, unless there is to be a thorough reconstruction of the present system, by means of which the weak and underprivileged may secure a fairer share of the necessities of life, and all of us find a measure of security which makes for self-respect. A new generation of employers and stockholders is to be raised up who will be Christian enough to recognize that industry and commerce must be administered primarily for public service, and not for personal aggrandizement and the excess profits of the few, while ninety per cent are living in insecurity and fear, and thirty per cent in periodic distress and actual want.

Even in normal times, with ample opportunity for work for all, if we are going to make the working world a world of friendly and honest workmen who find in labor not a hardship and a curse, but a means for the making of a worthwhile life; if we are going to put morale back into industry, then we must give the worker the chance to invest his whole personality in his work, his intelligence, high purpose, and good will. This he cannot do without genuine initiative, and perhaps some share, through his representatives, in the management of a coöperative enterprise. Amidst all the Babel voices of the modern world one

discerns the human cry for *work with more meaning*; work with more spiritual stimulus and moral value. Even in a machine age shall not a man have the chance to invest his will power and intelligence? Must not industry be so organized as to challenge from every man some investment of heart and brain and hand?

After reading this chapter thus far a friend asks, "How does all this come into a book on Jesus' religion? Isn't this just sociology?" To be sure, a Moslem, a Hindu, and a Buddhist would agree that this is not religion at all. But in Jesus' religion it was specifically included by the Master himself. One who has the least doubt about it should read again the Gospel of Luke. No one can narrow the Christian religion to exclude the law of love. Loving your neighbor as yourself is living the religion of Jesus; and this must embrace all social relations, including industry. No Christian's religion is worth anything who keeps it out of his business, where it is most needed. Even the worship of such a Christian is only a solemn farce.

To be sure the Christian world has been slow to realize this truth. Many orthodox Christians in their jealousy for the religion *about* Jesus have been inclined to look askance at the practical religion of the Carpenter. Only six years ago the Northern Baptist Convention met in Los Angeles and posted on the wall back of the platform this keynote slogan for their sessions: "We Believe in a Christ-like World.

We Know of Nothing Better; We can be Satisfied with Nothing Less." But it was in the midst of the Fundamentalist controversy, and the conservative delegation from Arizona protested against this statement, as the official pronouncement of the Convention, as "too liberalistic." Fortunately they were voted down. But in the few years since that event the conviction has been rapidly growing, in all churches, that the truer test of orthodoxy is not theological opinions but agreement with the living principles of Jesus. It is not long since such saintly men as Josiah Strong and Walter Rauschenbusch and even Washington Gladden were persecuted for their faith in the social religion of Jesus. But their faith has now become officially orthodox! "The Social Creed of the Churches," adopted first by the Methodists in 1904, expanded by the Federal Council of Churches in 1908, and accepted in varying versions by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and nearly all other large denominations, has put united American Protestantism officially on record as accepting the normal responsibility of Jesus' social message. It is religion. To deny it is no longer even "orthodox"!

The frankest and most courageous statements of the need of greater loyalty to the social ideals of Jesus have come recently from the Methodist Episcopal leadership. A group of their officials, on January first, 1931, in a most devout and consecrated spirit, issued an open letter, in which they took advanced ground on this sensitive subject, and chal-

lenged their fellow Christians to accept with them the logical conclusions of the intense social sympathy of Jesus. Realizing that many will be loth to do this, and will still try to keep the church compromised by alliances with anti-social wealth, they suggested that the time may have come when the church needs to grow strong by subtraction. But at all costs it must become the Church of the Good Samaritan.

A year later, the "episcopal address" to the quadrennial General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at Atlantic City, New Jersey, contained the following solemn challenge. Coming from such a distinguished group of leaders as the Methodist Bishops, it deserves the thoughtful attention of the entire country.

"The kingdom of God cannot be built upon the poverty of the many and the absurd and cruel wealth of the few. From the viewpoint of citizenship we of America know that the democracy for which our fathers died may be destroyed by the inhuman and unchristian monopoly of great wealth. Such a monopoly would destroy business itself. And if not corrected it would destroy society and the state. In no uncertain terms and with deep conviction we call upon the leaders of both capital and labor to remake the whole structure of industrial life upon the teachings of Christ. . . . Those who refuse to listen to the demands for such reconstruction constitute a most dangerous threat to the development of orderly civilization. For if by their continued resistance this needed reconstruction is made impossible as an orderly development, a breaking point is sure to come, as a result of which much that is good in our

present civilization will perish in the attempt to do away with much that is evil." ⁹

No wonder, under such a challenge from their Bishops, the General Conference in their final resolutions concluded that the church "must not acquiesce in the continuance of the present status, which is unchristian, unethical, and anti-social, because largely based on the profit motive."

We have seen, therefore, that most of the Protestant churches are definitely claiming that it is the duty of religion to put industry to religious tests as Jesus and the Hebrew prophets did. *No sphere of human activity can claim to be beyond the jurisdiction of Christ's Golden Rule.* Certainly the industrial system is not sacrosanct. If it is bearing down unjustly on men, who has a better right to say so than those friends of men, the ministers of religion?

That broad-spirited banker, Mr. Otto H. Kahn, who has himself expressed doubts as to the permanency of the present industrial system, complains because there is no more descriptive word than "Capitalism" for what he defines as "the system of individual effort, incentive, and free enterprise." This idealized definition is more flattering than the dictionary. It overlooks the fact that, in practice, capitalism is the industrial system conducted for the benefit of the capitalists, that is, the bondholders and stockholders. Its unchristian aspects are partly due

⁹ From "*The Episcopal Address*," Quadrennial General Conference, Atlantic City, N. J., May, 1932.

to its failure in "individual effort, incentive, and free enterprise"! It is because of the possibilities in these three ideal aspects of capitalism, properly safeguarded and supplemented, that most Christians still believe the present system can be salvaged; or better, perhaps, be so democratized as to deserve a truer name. For after all, capitalism is not a congenial term. It is usually applied unsympathetically as an epithet of criticism.

Socially minded Christians, who feel acutely the economic abuses of the present system, are not agreed on what sort of industrial system the mind of Christ would approve. A few have joined Norman Thomas and Sherwood Eddy and become socialists. For years, especially in England, many have toyed with the term Christian socialism; but it will not do, partly because it is a contradiction in terms. Under what name can modern liberals unite who seek a working world that is Christian. Certainly the "rugged individualism" of unrestrained capitalism has broken down. This is painfully evident, the past few months. Plenty of fair-minded business men have admitted it. The recurrent business cycles, which mean recurrent unemployment cycles, proclaim its stupid failure. It may serve the capitalists; it does not serve the public.

On the other hand Marxian socialism is materialistic folly; and Soviet communism is social tyranny. Under the stress of the Christian conscience, a new industrialism is even now in the making. It will be neither socialism nor capitalism, but something be-

tween the two. It is waiting for a name, and a rallying slogan. Whatever you may call it, its essence is industrial democracy. *Mutualism* expresses its motive, and it is a Christian motive. It is not seeking industrial readjustment purely for the benefit of the laborer, as communism does. That would be essentially as unchristian as a narrow capitalism. Both are too one-sided to be Christian.

Mutualism seeks fair treatment for all of the four personal forces involved in industry, the four personal groups, capitalists (stockholders and bondholders), executives, employees, and the public. All are necessary partners in the enterprise, and industry never can really serve society successfully until it is just to all four groups involved. Mutualism, of course, involves a mutual good will which shares responsibilities as well as profits, but according to function and value of service rendered. It is a convenient and descriptive name for a system which is already in process of evolution, as the present system is now gradually becoming humanized and Christianized. Many have overlooked the fact that many enterprises in America, under liberal and often Christian management, have already taken long steps away from feudalism and its war system in industry by becoming democratized, in fact even constitutionalized.

We sincerely hope this process of evolving capitalism into mutualism, under the stress of Christian motives, may rapidly continue and thus produce a

Christianized, humanized society which is not dominated by any one group, like Wall Street, Italy, and Russia; but is mutually and justly controlled for the benefit of all the people. Such an evolution would save us from the social revolution which many anticipate; some with the eager expectation of those who have nothing to lose, others with grave apprehension.

The reader will notice that this chapter has carefully avoided all specific, detailed suggestions. Jesus and his law of love and Golden Rule kept within the sphere of fundamental principles. This is as far as religion can go. It must leave details of technical problems to the specialists. It may condemn our present unchristian, planless chaos and our "competitive anarchy of private profit," and may demand that for the moral welfare of society a Planning Commission be called, which shall include not simply capitalists, but all four groups in industry. But such a Planning Commission, to produce a general social order out of our present chaos, must be guided by the enlightened experience of trained experts as well as the social sympathy of men with the Christly heart. Advocates of the religion of Jesus, eager to Christianize the modern social order, may rightfully urge our evolving into a mutualism in industry which shall assure social justice for all. But the technical question, HOW? is not for religion to answer.

Radicals would have us believe that all business

men are knights of the golden fleece, unmitigated profiteers. But most of us know better. On the rolls of all our churches there are employers with social conscience just as keen as their minister's. They are sorely hampered by "the system," but are doing their best to put the spirit of Christ into their business. By breaking away from the system to a considerable extent, Mr. William H. Hapgood of Indianapolis, head of the Columbia Conserve Company, has developed remarkably the morale and the coöperation of his workers. He has thoroughly mutualized his business, and treats his employees not as "hands" but as human beings. In fact, they are really partners. Surely this is being Christian. There are many other enterprises which keep free from strikes because there is fair treatment and resulting contentment among the workmen. It is not chiefly a question of wages, but of the organization of business on a human basis.

There are many corporations that have shop councils, to which the various groups of employees elect their representatives, and special committees to improve working and living conditions. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company is typical of such organizations, with its joint committees on sanitation, health and housing; on safety and accident; on coöperation and conciliation; and on education and recreation. These committees, through the joint council of labor and management, control the working conditions, consider all grievances, and adjust all the differences

arising between executives and employees. To quite an extent they also supervise living conditions, besides relieving the monotony of life by an interesting social and recreational program, which is not superimposed upon them but is on their own initiative. To be sure, this plan does not go so far toward mutualism as does the Columbia Conserve Company, but it has worked wonders in improving human relations and morale. It is mentioned here because of the Christian way in which the plan was developed, and to sustain our claim that capitalism is already undergoing a process of humanizing which leads logically to mutualism.

In 1914 the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was frankly on the war basis. A bitter strike made the whole mine area a war zone all summer. The writer saw there a regiment of troops, protecting the property with the heavy arm of a capitalized society. In the occasional fighting both miners and soldiers were killed, and according to newspaper reports, also a few women and children. It was hell in industry. But the Christian president of that corporation, Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was evidently so distressed by the experience he determined to cure the cause if possible. So he spent three months in the coal fields, investigated every mine, interviewed hundreds of workmen, and even visited their homes and families. Meanwhile he called in experts in social work for counsel and the completion of his survey. The result of this face-to-face

process of mutual understanding was the elimination of all ill-will, and the establishment of the shop council plan referred to above, with its joint working committees. It is not surprising that in the eighteen years since, there has been but a single strike in that industry, and that a minor one.

For the purpose of this chapter the importance of the above illustration lies not in the details of the plan but in the Christian attitude and the face-to-face, personal method which humanized the whole situation. It is the "soulless corporation" that has bedeviled industry. The corporation is a legal person, with the legal rights of personality but avoiding full moral responsibility thereof. Such an ethical monstrosity has no rightful place in a Christian world. Corporations must accept full moral responsibility or quit masquerading as persons. This process is already going on. If it continues, capitalism is not beyond redemption. It may evolve into mutualism, if the Christian conscience guides the process to its logical conclusions.

This Christianizing process, then, is the *re-personalizing of business*. A Christian world would be a world with the true family spirit of good will in which all treat each other as persons, and as brothers. In such a human society, personal profit is not inconsistent if it is a reasonable profit which impoverishes no one, but gives fair return for service rendered. The dominant motive, however, would be the mutual service, and the chief products of industry would be

character and happiness. Profit would be the by-product. How true these lines from Edwin Markham!

"We are all blind until we see
That in the human plan
Nothing is worth the making if
It does not make the man.

"Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilt goes?
In vain we build the work, unless
The builder also grows." ¹⁰

Does some critic suggest there would not be enough self-interest served by mutualism to furnish the necessary incentive to maintain it? It may be so, until more people discover that pure selfishness is soul-suicide, and that self-interest involves really benefiting the self. Jesus spoke the last word about the profit motive when he said: "What doth it *profit* a man, if he *gain* the whole world, and lose his own self?" ¹¹ This is the only use of the word "profit" in all the Gospels. No further allusion to it was necessary. But does this seem like begging the question by the familiar escape to otherworldliness? Not at all. Many wealthy people have been wise enough to discover that the law of diminishing returns applies even to profits! Beyond a certain point, excess profits simply do not pay. Nor is this merely because of that inexorable reaper, the high-

¹⁰ Edwin Markham, "Man Building." In *Poems of Justice*.
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¹¹ Mark 8:36.

brackets of the federal income tax. It is because the excess profits cost too high, in the varied curses of unbrotherliness and its terrible reactions, ever to be worth the price. Jesus was everlastingly right: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the *things* that he possesseth."

Mutualism, then, an industrial system which serves fairly all four personal groups in industry, would yield dividends to all. The cash dividends would not be spurned, even by idealists. But the "extra dividends" would all be in happiness and deep human satisfactions. And the only "stock dividends" would be in genuine growth of personality, and a kinder community. The writer has faith enough in the gradual victory of the spirit of Christ in the world to believe that this goal can be attained without the catastrophe of a social revolution. But the revolution threatens, unless the spirit of Christ is given right of way. As Sherwood Eddy significantly says, "If we cannot Christianize our social order by consent, it is possible that it may be communized by force." Mutualism is the attempt to avoid both selfish extremes, the Scylla and Charybdis of capitalism and socialism.

XXVI

THE GOLDEN RULE AND THE USE OF WEALTH

It seems singular that we find in the Gospels no record of Jesus ever giving alms to the poor. The only suggestion that he ever did so, we find in the latest of the Gospels, and it is only an editorial note by the writer.¹ Public almsgiving (with private injustice) was an orthodox expression of the religion of his day; like public prayer and private cursing. It was quite popular with the rich, with their many caravans of camels. But it received Jesus' condemnation.² He advised his disciples, "But when thou doest alms, let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret." When asked for alms himself, he gave what the poor beggar most needed. He removed the cause of his poverty, his blindness.³

Quite evidently Jesus could not believe, that, in the right sort of a world, almsgiving should be necessary. So he planned far beyond it. "Charity" as a solution of poverty is hardly a Christian idea. The poor hate the word and shun it. Christians with

¹ John 13:29.

² Matthew 6:1-4.

³ John 9:1-12.

fine feeling avoid using the term. The Golden Rule would forbid its use. That beautiful Greek word, "Charis," from which it is derived, means disinterested love. It never meant almsgiving. Almsgiving is apt to hurt both him that gives and him that takes. It tends to pauperize the poor recipient, robbing him of his last possession, his self-respect. And it tends to inflate the giver with self-complacency. Often publicity for the giver is the main intent of it, not kindness.

Jesus' discussion of the subject was from the viewpoint of the effect of giving upon the giver. If you give in the wrong spirit, like the rich Pharisees, it curses you with pride; but if you give really in the right spirit, then it is more blessed than to receive.* To have to receive charity can hardly be called blessed. Apparently Jesus' best solution of this tangled problem was to do exactly what our modern scientific social work does: Investigate the cause, then meet the need by friendly service, removing the cause if possible, in the spirit of the fine slogan, "Not Alms But a Friend." This is the most truly Christian treatment of the poor. But almsgiving must always be regarded as a superficial palliative for a problem which still clamors for solution. The only instances we have in which Jesus said "Give to the poor" were in connection with the story of the rich young ruler, when he had most in mind the effect upon the giver's character. Even then he did not say give cash to the

* Acts 20:35.

poor. He would have doubtless advised giving not what they asked for, but what they most needed.⁵

We find a characteristic word from Jesus on this matter in Luke 11:41. "Give for alms those things which are within." (American Standard Version.) Gifts of kindness, friendliness, compassion, gracious understanding, sympathy, make even the cup of cold water more welcome than gold bestowed condescendingly by the arrogant rich. The real gift is the gift of self, for personality is the ultimate riches. "The gift without the giver is bare." Any gift is cheap and relatively unappreciated that involves no self-giving. The truest giving is sharing life. Jesus' praise of the tiny but magnificent gift of the widow's mites, which carried with it her all, including her heart's loyalty, is the world's greatest chapter on giving.⁶

The compassionate Christ must have asked himself often, "Why should there be any paupers?" People who consider almsgiving the final solution of human inequalities are fond of quoting him as saying, "The poor ye shall always have with you." But Jesus never said it. What he actually said, when Judas made his insincere allusion to "giving to the poor," was this: "The poor ye *have* always with you; but me ye have not always."⁷ It was present, not future tense. He was simply stating a present fact. He was making no prophecy, certainly not for twenty centuries to come. Least of all was he dogmatizing that poverty must

⁵ Luke 18:22; 12:33. ⁶ Luke 21:1-4. ⁷ John 12:8.

last forever, so Christians need not bother about removing the causes of it. Most of the causes of poverty can be removed, and science plus the Christian spirit will ultimately do it.

Another point, closely related to almsgiving, on which Jesus was hardly orthodox, was the traditional custom of tithing. This was one of the daily boasts of the scribes and Pharisees, and a part of their defense psychosis, as a substitute for moral conduct. Jesus' insistent social conscience rebelled against anything that was a subterfuge, a cheap substitute for righteousness. All his life he had noted the inflation of spiritual pride which the mechanical custom of devoting one-tenth of everything to God gave the insincere Pharisees. Even then it was shrewdly mitigated by frequent technical evasion.⁸ Jesus refers to it only to criticize it, and to warn his friends against its subtle spiritual danger.⁹

Jesus' principle relative to giving was on a higher plane than the mechanical and often unjust system of giving one-tenth. The Jews allowed that one-tenth of their possessions and one-seventh of their time belonged to God; they could do as they pleased with the rest. For the follower of Christ all his time, all possessions, all talents, are held in trust for God. His parables of the Talents, the Pounds, and the Unrighteous Steward all teach this doctrine of stewardship clearly.¹⁰ Others may be content with devot-

⁸ Mark 7:11.

⁹ Matthew 23:23; Luke 18:12.

¹⁰ Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-17; Luke 16:1-13.

ing their tenth, for the Christian the whole of life is devoted to consecrated living, with systematic and conscientious giving. For as we discovered in Chapter XXIV, there is no absolute ownership for the Christian. "Not one of them said that the things which he possessed were his own."¹¹ Not his own to waste foolishly, nor spend recklessly, nor enjoy selfishly without regard for the demands of brotherliness and the world's need. The Golden Rule sets its challenging standard before the Christian in this matter of the use of his possessions, as in everything else in life. Christians are God's trustees. *Wealth is responsibility, not special privilege.* That is the clear teaching of the Master.

The phrase in this chapter's title, the Use of Wealth, is of course much broader than the subject of benevolence. In the brief years of his itinerant ministry Jesus had little use for money; but we may be sure the Carpenter of Nazareth found frequent opportunity to discover by experience that money is a symbol for power. He doubtless would agree with Henry Ford that the most self-respecting way to help a man is to give him employment. It is quite possible that he had to employ extra workmen. If so, he took satisfaction in the constructive use of money in the form of wages.

Let us look again at that strange parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.¹² The question, "Why stand ye all the day idle?" is Jesus' protest against

¹¹ Acts 4:32.

¹² Matthew 20:1-15.

the waste and the social dangers of unemployment. To see men who were able to work, and doubtless anxious for the opportunity, standing idle in the market place caused him deep concern. He was wise enough to know that no society can afford to have its personal and industrial assets thus idle. All non-producers are a burden to society, but when the unemployment is involuntary, it is one of the super-tragedies of life. Even criminals and prisoners must not be kept idle, but be given the chance for productive labor, or society is seriously threatened. Our present situation, with more millions unwillingly loafing than history has ever known before, is more ominous, more fraught with social peril, than is generally realized.

Jesus evidently saw no place in the kingdom of good will for the shirk, nor for the involuntarily idle. Professor Charles F. Kent thought the householder in this parable was simply in advance of his age, "for he stood on an unassailable economic as well as moral basis." That is, unless we admit it is the legitimate aim of industry "to allow a few to fatten at the expense of the majority."¹⁸ If industry is to promote the well-being and efficiency of the social group as a whole, then its task is to provide a respectable means of livelihood for all its members, even those who can work but the one hour. This means, today and in all times of work shortage, that every employer and

¹⁸ C. F. Kent, *The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus*, p. 237. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons and quoted with their permission.

every citizen is morally bound to do everything in his power to provide work for those anxious to do it. Far better to pay wages for a short day's work than to pay an unrequited dole to men who are eating their hearts out, and losing morale and self-respect, merely loafing.

As former President Coolidge recently said, "Even the unemployed have no real right to be paid for doing nothing." We owe them work, but not the dole. The dole is "charity." But we noted Jesus' dislike of almsgiving. No problem is solved by giving charity. As Lloyd George said of the English dole system, "It is the highest price any people ever paid to avoid revolution." A "dole" which is just payment from contributory pension funds is social insurance. But a dole which is only alms is but a temporary relief measure, an apology for dodging the real issue, the reconstruction of industry so that charity will be unnecessary. That sort of a dole is a confession that we have not yet a Christian society.

A Christian people must ultimately provide opportunity for work for all its capable workmen, like the householder in Jesus' parable. It will be costly, but in the long run it will cost less than the present anti-social condition in which we support millions in idleness and many thousands, in the underworld, in crime. A just mutualism in industry, eliminating the excess profits of a selfish capitalism, would probably provide work for all. It would provide the vastly increased purchasing power of the masses without

which there can be no permanent prosperity. It may seriously be doubted whether, after all, the stabilizing of employment by unemployment insurance and furnishing work for all worthy of it would prove any more costly than the billions we shall spend in doles before the present orgy of local and national expense for unemployment is over.

It would be unfair, however, not to note the remarkable increase in the number of consecrated fortunes in this country in the past generation. The number of wealthy men with social ideals is steadily growing. The compassion of Jesus for the suffering is getting into the world's heart. The selfish custom of keeping large estates intact in the family, and making no public bequests, is rather rapidly passing. The establishing of many large foundations, like the Sage, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Guggenheim Foundations, for educational and social purposes, is a recognition of the fact that this wealth came from society and should in some way be repaid. This was specifically stated in the gift by the famous surgeons, the Mayo brothers of Rochester, Minnesota, a few years ago, to the University of Minnesota. They gave two million dollars of their earnings to be used for advanced medical education and research, and with the gift came this simple message: "We never regarded this money as ours. It came from the people, and we believe, my brother and myself, that it should go back to the people. That was our father's attitude in life."

The recent development, on a nation-wide scale, of the community-chest plan for meeting the needs of the various local charitable organizations, is another hopeful indication that the ideals of Jesus about the use of money are getting into the hearts of our people. The plan started in Cleveland immediately after the war and has continued with increasingly efficient thoroughness. Last December in the midst of deep depression in that city the vast sum of \$5,693,000 was very quickly raised, by a well-organized committee of over a thousand citizens, to cover the budgets of the city's social and charitable agencies, numbering over one hundred. Rich and poor alike contribute. It is a strikingly democratic enterprise and every year it arouses greater local enthusiasm and a finer unity than anything else that happens during the twelve months.

The plan has spread to over three hundred cities, with a total amount raised this year estimated at about \$200,000,000. It is too early even to attempt an estimate of the total appropriations of cities, states, and the federal government to care for the families of the unemployed this year of our greatest need, but it has already run into ten figures. It is the most enormous sum ever spent by any nation for such a purpose. Only a Christian social conscience could have brought this about, with its deep sense of moral responsibility in such a social emergency.

XXVII

THE GOLDEN RULE AND THE NATION

THOUGH we need most of all the spirit of Jesus in politics, and in world affairs, it is the subject on which he had the least to say. Yet to claim that he was not interested in politics would be doing him an injustice. When Jesus was a boy the revolutionists of Galilee, Judas and Saddouk, were doubtless among his heroes. His studied silence on politics in his teachings shows fine self-restraint. Other great teachers, like Plato and Mohammed, committed themselves to a definite form of government, but Jesus was too wise for that. Had he opposed the empire and fought against kings, he would have handicapped Christianity in every monarchy since. We have seen in an earlier chapter that he had no high opinion of royalty, and occasionally spoke of kings with gentle scorn.¹ But he acquiesced in the political situation as he found it, referred to kings in his parables in a matter-of-fact way,² and gave no cause whatever for the charge of sedition on which he was finally arrested.

Under these circumstances it was the greatest irony that the empty charge, posted over his cross, should

¹ Mark 10:42; Matthew 11:8; Luke 22:25.

² Matthew 18:23; 22:2; Mark 3:24.

be that he claimed to be a rival king! This was probably due to his frequent use of the terms, kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven, in relation to his movement. The Fourth Gospel tells us he definitely told Pilate that his Kingdom was not of this world. That is, it was spiritual.³ And when his enthusiastic partisans tried to make him a king perforce, he quietly withdrew.⁴ He recognized the state's authority, and warned his disciples that on his account they were likely to be arrested and brought before governors and kings.⁵ But he suggested no resistance. When his enemies cleverly invented a political dilemma by which to ruin his career, even then he was non-committal, and skillfully checkmated them. They faced him with the burning question of the day in current politics, Should we pay tribute to Rome? His counter-question: "Show me the tribute money: Whose is this image and superscription?" was surely an inspiration! Then how logical and harmless his conclusion! "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." A perfectly non-committal answer; but it settled the question. If they accepted the coinage of Rome, then the burden was on them. Let them answer for themselves. "He whose coin is current is king of the land" was a popular proverb. Did Jesus pay the tax to Rome? Probably he did, if he owned anything the publicans could levy on; but we cannot prove it from the Gospels. That narrative about

³ John 18:36.

⁴ John 6:15.

⁵ Matthew 10:17.

the half-shekel concerned the 'Temple tax.'⁶ It had nothing to do with civil taxes.

What a harmless, colorless record! If Jesus said a word against the Roman power, or anything specific about current politics, his biographers failed to notice it. The times were hectic politically, but Jesus with great tactfulness kept out of the turmoil. Doubtless he knew that his teaching career would be suddenly eclipsed if he did otherwise. Has he then had no influence whatever on the course of political history? And is there no such thing as a Christian state? Shortly before last Christmas the head of the political science department of Oberlin College, in a chapel address, paid high tribute to Jesus of Nazareth as the strongest personal force in all history, even political history. His ideals of the preciousness of the individual and the primacy of human values have certainly had much to do with the great movement of individualism, and the ending of political tyrannies and the foolish pomp of kings. There is much truth in these lines by James Alvord:

"He tramples out the wine-press of his wrath;
He puts the mighty down from their high seat;
Time-rotted tyrannies topple at his feet;
Gaunt, discrowned specters flit before his path.
 Their doom was in his word
 When first Judea heard
Of brotherhood. Kings scuttle at his nod,
Blown down black battles by the breath of God.

⁶ Matthew 17:27.

Their cross, and his, drives on the smash of things.

*The Carpenter builds scaffolds for the kings!"*⁷

That is, the spirit of Jesus has inevitably opposed tyrants; and though it is plain there is no Christian form of government, a state is Christian if it has the spirit of Christ and gives all citizens a just and equal opportunity. Wherever brotherhood is compromised there stands the Christ, championing human rights.

Is there no dynamic for outworn systems in the message of Christ? Probably where we least expect it, in spite of his circumspect life. If we could imagine that Jesus, like Paul, had been brought before Cæsar, and the great Tiberius had asked him "What word of wisdom hast thou, Galilean, for the Emperor?" it would not surprise us to hear him say, "Sire, if thou would'st rule in justice, treat thy people as thou would'st have them treat thee." It would have puzzled the Emperor for a week; after which, if not before, he would have decided: "Impossible. I could never do it, and keep my throne."

"Ridiculous," all advocates of royalty would say. The Golden Rule has nothing to do with politics. That is not its sphere." A well-known European writer, at whose door can be laid much of the blame for the World War, made this bold statement some years ago: "The state is the sole judge of the morality of its own action. It is in fact above morality. In other words, whatever is necessary is moral. The Christian law of love applies only to the

⁷ In the magazine *Poetry*, August, 1918, p. 240.

individuals of the same state." * Yet this "super-state" cannot act save when some person or persons decide and act for it. Shall we expect them, as fathers and brothers, to act on the ethics of the Golden Rule; but allow them, as kings and counselors, to act on no ethics at all? Jesus set no limits to the jurisdiction of his Golden Rule. For him there can be no super-state. That concept is for pagans who know no brotherhood. The Christian state is but a larger family, a wider brotherhood, whose mutual good will works out through the Golden Rule.

This family ideal of the state humanizes all politics and explains that most radical of all Jesus' teachings, "Love your enemies." His discovery of the mighty power of kindness made him believe thoroughly that love is the most effective force to use against one's enemies. It is often said that Jesus was opposed to all use of force; but this is not true either of his personal practice or his teaching. The much quoted verse, "Resist not evil," should be translated, "Resist not him that is evil." That is, do not fight back. As Henry Churchill King says, "Jesus' whole life is one constant resistance to evil." ° He was as vigorous as an Old Testament prophet in his fight against injustice and hypocrisy. To be sure we cannot conceive of Jesus' using an automatic revolver, nor even the short sword of his day. But he did not need to. The spiritual force of his personality was more effective and less provocative. We see it in action

* Bernhardt.

° H. C. King, *The Way to Life*.

that day in the Temple when he found the holy precincts desecrated by grafters, and with flashing eye and an improvised whip he drove them out before him single-handed. Whether he actually used the whip on the men or merely the cattle, or neither, he was using the powerful force of an aroused personality. Only the Fourth Gospel refers to the whip; and there is no indication that Jesus ever used it at all.¹⁰

The method of "passive resistance" is claimed to be the method of Jesus. But we may well wonder if Jesus would employ this method of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi is simply fighting England in the most effective, available way. Physical force is not always the most telling way to damage an enemy. Gandhi is injuring his enemy severely by his boycott. He is not using the Golden Rule at all. There is not the slightest kindness about his policy. It is warfare, not love.

Jesus' way of meeting insult and injury was quite different. He used personal force, but it was always the force of love in action. The single passage which is quoted often to prove that Jesus was opposed to all use of force is the following:

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to the law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy

¹⁰ John 2:15.

cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two." ¹¹

Professor Kent translates the key word of this passage not "resist" but "resent." He claims it is a doctrine of *non-resentment* rather than non-resistance, as it was always the motive which counted with Jesus.¹² The word "*avenge*" seems even closer to the thought of Jesus. He was speaking of personal injuries, such as a blow on the face, or a stolen coat. He says under such circumstances *do not retaliate*, do not try to get even by avenging the insult in kind. Such retaliation defeats its own purpose and merely prolongs the fight. But the point to notice is, Jesus does not counsel non-resistance. That is too negative for such an aggressive, vigorous person as he. He advises the use of force, but only the positive force of a loving personality. Giving your overcoat to the thief who stole your coat, and going the extra mile are not passive resistance at all, but forceful acts of kindness. As Professor Scott says in this connection, "By so doing a man makes himself superior to his adversary. He transforms into his own free act what would otherwise be an indignity forced upon him." ¹³

A leader in the English church was the victim of a hold-up on a dark side street in London. After giving up both watch and purse he talked in a friendly

¹¹ Matthew 5:38-41.

¹² C. F. Kent, *opus cit.*, p. 208.

¹³ E. F. Scott, *The Ethical Teachings of Jesus*, p. 73. Quoted with permission of publisher, The Macmillan Company.

fashion with the young robber and found the fellow was in dire straits for money. He offered to loan him fifty pounds if he would call at his home the next day. Such undeserved kindness and trust appealed to the thief's better nature and shamed him into returning what he had stolen. He called the next day, received the proffered loan; and returned it all within a year.

Not without good reason is Christ called the Prince of Peace. His kindly heart has doubtless been pained by the suffering caused by every war in history. With the deep conviction that every man is his brother, war would be as unthinkable for him as a murderous quarrel in the family. To every nation Jesus Christ is now saying, "Put up thy sword."¹⁴ Bernard Shaw expressed the convictions of many when he recently remarked, "I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will, if he had undertaken the great work of a modern practical statesman." But the world has already begun to follow the mind of Christ. Sixty nations have adopted the Pact of Paris, thereby outlawing war as a means of settling international disputes. So war is now *a breach of international law*.

The pathos of it is, after making this gesture of mutual friendliness, the nations go right on with their preparations for war, which shows their mutual suspicion unabated. When the Treaty of Versailles

¹⁴ John 18:11.

disarmed Germany, it was agreed that the other nations would gradually reduce armaments. Provision for such reduction was written into Article 8 of the League of Nations Covenant, and a permanent disarmament commission was appointed, including unfortunately only military and naval men. Yet until the world Disarmament Conference now in session at Geneva, little has been accomplished. On the contrary there are now, according to President Hoover, 30,000,000 men under arms in the world, 10,000,000 more than before the World War; and the world is wasting on armament and defense the huge sum of \$4,000,000,000 a year. No wonder every nation is poor! It is a national disgrace that our own country, which least of all nations needs to be defended, because of its isolation, is the worst offender against the world's peace, for our military and naval bill has now risen to \$700,000,000 a year, by far the largest in the world. This is an increase of 1370% in the last half century, and 235% increase in twenty years. Yet when the President urged Congress to reduce this, they refused; to their shame be it said. This expensive game of preparedness, with its competitive increase of armaments, is exciting still more suspicion, unbrotherliness, and ill will between nations that ought to be friendly. Great armies and navies are the world's chief cause of war. They never furnish us "preparedness" for peace.

It has taken the world, and even the Christian

church, many centuries to discover that the religion of Jesus must ultimately kill the whole war system. A Christian world must be a warless world. A brotherly world controlled by mutual good will could have no use for armies and navies with their equipment for murder and hatred. In very recent years the churches of all nations have come to see these facts clearly and have been promoting a powerful world-peace movement. Militarists in all lands are fighting this movement at every step. That is quite natural. No one likes to be made unnecessary! Militarists very obviously have the upper hand still in Japan; but they are losing ground the world over, while the cause of peace is gaining among all peoples.

The Christian churches and ministers in America in the past three years have spoken with great boldness on this issue. A typical pronouncement is this from the Methodist Conference last year at Pittsburgh: "We are more deeply convinced than ever that war is anti-Christ. It destroys everything that Jesus died to preserve; and keeps alive everything that he lived to destroy. In loyalty to him, the church must disassociate itself both from the terrible business of waging war and from the agencies and policies which have demonstrated that they inevitably result in war."

Many thousands of ministers, in all denominations, are definitely on record as opposed to war and the stimulation of the war-spirit by preparedness.

Though committing themselves a bit further than many of us are ready to go, the Ohio Convention of ministers of all Protestant churches adopted this resolution at their session in Cleveland last January: "We renounce completely the whole war system. We will never again sanction or participate in any war. We will not use our pulpits or classrooms as recruiting stations. . . . We will not give our financial or moral support to any war."

To a large extent the forces of education are with the forces of religion on this great issue. Many schoolmen, and colleges, and universities are actively opposed to that union of militarism and education which the War Department is still promoting, in the form of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. The government is spending some twelve millions of dollars a year on military drill in high schools and colleges. Last year in 313 schools and colleges there were 147,000 boys and young men enrolled as cadets, including over 95,000 in institutions where the drill was compulsory. Educators are almost unanimous against this forcing of militarism upon the colleges. The churches are determined to stop this dangerous propaganda for war, regarding it as one of the most unchristian activities in our country today. The spirit of this militaristic propaganda is made quite clear in the following quotation from the War Department's textbook on "Citizenship," prepared for use in their training camps. Among the enemies of America they include education for peace-minded-

ness. They seem to consider it even a greater enemy than foreign armies and navies:

"The attempt to undermine the nation from within is more serious than the threat of armed force from without. An impractical and destructive idealism called internationalism is being propagated by certain foreign agitators and echoed by many intellectuals. Its efforts are to combat the spirit of patriotism." . . . *etcetera ad nauseam!*¹⁸

It is a squarely drawn issue between the War Department at Washington and the educational and religious forces of the country. There can be no doubt as to the ultimate issue. It is too late for militarism to win against such powerful opposition.

Space has been given here for these details because the issue is so tremendously significant for the peace of the world. All other nations are looking to lagging America, with its vast power of latent idealism, to lead the way out of this awful bog of militarism, to the plains of peace. The terrible costs of the late war, in men, in treasure, and in inter-racial hatreds, have cursed this poor world for half a century to come. There can be no hope for relief from the terrible tax burdens which are now strangling all nations until militarism is driven from the throne. The Man of Nazareth has taught us the spirit and method of good will. He has furnished us the mighty strategy of kindness, the infinite force of love. It is the ultimate goal of his religion to bring "peace on earth, among men of good will."

¹⁸ Training Manual, *Citizenship*, p. 113. Published by the War Department, Nov. 30, 1928.

"Dreams are they—but they are God's dreams!
 Can we say nay as they claim us?
 That men shall cease from their hating,
 That war shall soon be abating,
 That the glory of kings and lords shall pale,
 That the pride of dominion and power shall fail,
 That the love of humanity shall prevail—
 Dreams are they all,
 But shall we despise them—
 God's dreams?" ¹⁶

¹⁶ Thomas Curtis Clark, "*God's Dreams*," in *Poems of Justice*, p. 186. Published by Willet, Clark and Colby, and quoted by permission.

XXVIII

THE RELIGION OF FRIENDSHIP AND JUSTICE

THE religion of Jesus was simplicity itself. He lived in an age when the scribes were doing their best to complicate religion and make it next to impossible. They hedged it about with fine-spun theories, petty rules, exceptions, and evasions. But Jesus cut away all these excrescences like so much underbrush. Yet the underbrush has grown again luxuriantly in all the Christian centuries. Theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, have outdone the Jewish rabbis in elaborating the simple, and making it quite complex and inscrutable for the layman. It was like gilding the diamond. This accounts for the many divisions in Christendom. It was not the religion of Jesus which separated denominations; it was chiefly the religion about Jesus.

Jesus was a layman with spiritual genius, who was spared the theological obfuscation of his day. Hence the simple clarity of his religious attitudes, ideals and convictions. We have found them to be few, but revolutionary. He had an intuitive facility for radical thinking, that is, for finding the roots of a prob-

lem, the essence of truth, faith, duty. Too concrete and practical to be a philosopher, he dealt not with debatable theories, but with the great issues and moral axioms of life. Consequently his religion was not primarily a creed nor a cult, but just *a way of life with spiritual power*. Starting with a loving God and a friendly world of persons, he wrought out in his own experience his simple working principles, all corollaries of his two-fold law of love. Scanning his list, many a scribe of the day would doubtless have said, "Why this isn't religion at all!" And Jesus certainly returned the compliment. Such matters as their Sabbath traditions and their petty tithing, he frankly condemned and discarded as irrelevant. Why call these things religion? They only burden the conscience without helping the soul:

"Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay the petty tithes on your garden herbs—mint, dill, and caraway seed; but neglect the important matters of the law—justice, compassion, and good faith."¹

He accused them of "straining at gnats and swallowing camels," their religion was so lacking in any sense of proportion. The really important things of life and duty they slipped over lightly or left out of their religion altogether.

It troubled Jesus greatly that so many people made religion so cheap and petty; and then frittered away their precious lives on trivial worries over food and

¹ Matthew 23:23.

clothing. "Is not the life more important than meat, and the body than clothing?" he asked them in quiet protest.² Again and again it was *life* that he stressed, not the mere externals. We shall be impressed by this fact as we think over again the great revolutionary ideals we have discovered in our foregoing chapters, in the religion he lived experimentally and taught so simply:

Human life must not be held cheap. A single soul is infinitely precious.

Happiness depends on character, and the inner resources of one's life.

Childlike trust is spiritually mighty. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

There is a subtle potency in kindness. It is a positive force which even conquers enemies.

Therefore we must treat others as we wish to be treated. This is the gold standard in religion.

Righteousness is moral goodness, not ritual. It is positive, not negative. It is not outward, but inward, from the heart.

Prayer brings self-renewal and spiritual power. It is the practice of friendship with God.

The spirit of forgiveness wins friends and conquers enemies. Manual labor is honorable, and love is never too proud to serve.

Unselfish service is the final test of character. The strong must help the weak. Service is greater than selfishness.

True neighborliness knows no limits.

True greatness is not in wealth, power, nor station. Greatness is character, humble service, and heroic living.

² Matthew 6:25.

So fundamental to the mind of Jesus were these radical principles of living, he would resent their being called "ethics," "custom," "mores." These and the Cross were the very things which made Christianity Christian. They were of the very essence of religion itself, for they all involved the concrete expression of love in action. Love in action is Christian living. Nothing else is. It is reverence for personality in God and man. So we see the Master's passion for radical simplicity reduced religion to a single word, *Friendship*. His vision of God's reign was of a coming world of friendly workmen. His own spirit, so generous and self-forgetful, was sacrificial love. His *method* was the friendly sympathy of positive kindness expressed in life-sharing service. And this overflowing life, which he shared so unstintedly, found its hidden springs in communion with his heavenly Father. A Christian, then, is simply a friendly comrade of the Jesus Way; one who has caught his vision, shares his spirit, and is living, by his method, a kindly life with spiritual power. The Jesus religion is the practice of friendship, with God and men. Its goal is the reign of God, a just and friendly world.

We see most clearly how earnestly Jesus hoped his disciples would learn this secret of the friendly life, in the narratives at the end of the Gospel of John. He put it in the form of a new commandment:

"Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide ye in my love. . . . This is my commandment,

that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you. . . . These things I command you, that ye may love one another.” *

“How these Christians love each other!” was frequently said in the early days of the church. They were called Christians—*Christ-men*—first at Antioch; but an even better name for followers of Jesus is just “*Friends*.”

However, Christian friendship is not just ordinary friendship. It is not merely a delightful fellowship for mutual benefit, in a limited, congenial group that is oblivious to the social needs of others. Jesus’ choice of friends was so strange and so varied that he was often criticized for it. He was never selfish or calculating about it. He chose friends he could help, not those who might give him prestige. This was a necessary part of his program of helpful service. It was a consistent result of his reverence for persons, all persons in the image of God, however marred that image might be. On one occasion he gave his followers this advice, reminding them of the satisfaction of befriending God’s neglected children:

“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neigh-

* John 15:9-17.

bors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just." ⁴

Here again we see the revolutionary character of Jesus' ideals. Even in social customs he did not hesitate to do the unusual thing, if his ideals called for it. This unpopular advice, if adopted generally, would revolutionize society! And no one likes to be revolutionized, not even a revolutionist. Yet society people frankly admit being bored by the rigid social requirement of returning invitations within their own class, with all the critical comparisons entailed. This soon becomes business, not friendship, with its necessary payment of social debts. On the other hand, Jesus' democratic ideal of friendship gives mutual pleasure and satisfaction. The unselfish friendship yields the rare joy of doing an unrequited favor. Such disinterested friendships vastly enrich and broaden the life of the giver as well as the receiver. But their chief outcome, in Jesus' plan, is a friendlier world with the unchristian lines of social cleavage, prejudice, and clannishness broken down.

The organized expression of Christian friendship in the world is the church of Christ. When it is ideal in its efficiency, it is an active Society of Friends. Its desire is to carry on the work of the Kingdom, and to utilize organized friendship for the building of a

⁴ Luke 14:12-14.

fairer world of social justice. The church's work for justice is the test of the sincerity of its friendship. Jesus' Golden Rule is the gold standard for religion, in every sphere of human relations. To the extent that the church is failing to live up to this gold standard, in family life, in business, politics, and world friendship, to that degree its friendship is below par and its religion is discounted. Herein is the practical test of a living church of Jesus Christ. Is its demonstration of friendship so thoroughly, sacrificially Christian that it is known in its community as the champion of social justice? Or is it chiefly a closed fellowship, a mutual benefit club? The religion of Jesus is the practice of friendship. But the friendship must be democratic, generously unselfish, and nobly sacrificial. We shall consider this efficiency test in the following chapter.

XXIX

THE RELIGION OF THE CROSS

THE world will never cease to wonder over the Cross of Christ. Theologians will always try to explain the mystery and the moral grandeur of it. The creeds must continue to exalt it, for it revealed the very heart of God. But the Cross, in the religion of Jesus, is more than all the theologies about it. It is more than a symbol for worship, or enigma for faith. It is a challenge to holy and heroic living. We suspect Jesus would say, "Do not worship the Cross; live it." Repeatedly he threw out this challenge to his friends:

"If any man would come after me, let him renounce selfishness, take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever is anxious to keep his life safe, shall lose it; but whoever for my cause loses his life, the same shall save it."¹

Real orthodoxy in Jesus' religion is not right beliefs about the Cross, but living the Cross, for his sake. Nothing in all his teachings seems more revolutionary than this, for the world has always maintained that self-preservation is the first law of life. The

¹ Luke 9:23, 24 (Author's translation); Matthew 16:24, etc.

modern slogan, "Safety First," still assumes this hoary heresy. Long ago Jesus proposed the substitute, "Service First," even at the cost of sacrifice. This is the supreme test, the essence of Christian living.

"Live dangerously!" suggests Signor Mussolini; though no one in the world is more amply guarded. It is a challenging motto, not unlike the challenge of the Cross, if rightly interpreted. The moral courage to take necessary risks accounts for all heroism. On the contrary, the "safety-first" attitude of people who are so sparing of themselves, is so cowardly, their hoarding of life loses friends for them, and they shrivel up into selfish insignificance. Being over-cautious and stingy is one of the surest ways of missing life and the joys of life. The renouncing of selfishness is fundamental in Christian living. Real Christian living is heroic living, daring to live dangerously, whenever the cause demands it.

A devoted medical missionary of the author's acquaintance came home from China a few years ago, on furlough, for research work at Johns Hopkins in tropical medicine. He brought with him a small vial of germs of a certain dread disease which had baffled him, and for which he hoped to find a serum. At quarantine that vial was challenged. He could not bring it into the United States. He was told to destroy it. Instead, he went to his stateroom, and swallowed the germs; and then went directly to the hospital for a severe illness. He took less than half

a chance to win his grim fight with death, that he might be the savior of China from that awful plague. But his indomitable spirit and the best of medical care pulled him through. Then he had plenty of germs for his research! Before the end of the year he had produced the desired serum, with which he will be able to save countless lives in the future. But he had to live dangerously, he had to risk losing his own life, to make him a life saver.

Such heroism was not the result of just a moment's recklessness. It had behind it half a lifetime of moral courage, developed by daily cross-bearing. By acquiring the habit of crucifying self, he gained the courage to be a savior. Glance through the list of Jesus' revolutionary ideals in our last chapter, and find the Cross at the heart of them all. To gain child-like humility, you must crucify pride. To gain proper respect for the worth of other persons, you must crucify egotism. To accept Jesus' ideal of true greatness, you must crucify worldly ambition. To live out his ideal of neighborliness, you must crucify race prejudice and clannishness. To win the forgiving spirit, you must crucify your grudges. To have the subtle power of kindness, you must crucify your hatred and anger. To accept his ideals of manual labor and unselfish service, you must crucify your snobbishness. To accept his gold standards of righteousness and really live by the Golden Rule, you must crucify selfishness. Bearing the cross once a year, or once a month will not make you Christian.

It takes the daily cross of the faithful sacrificial spirit, really to follow such a Master. The empty, Protestant cross is a better symbol of the Christian's life than the Catholic crucifix. The empty cross is waiting for the Christian. It took more than one cross to make Calvary. It takes many cross-bearing followers of Jesus to make a redeemed community. The church is a society of saviors; not one Savior and a thousand self-indulgent followers who fail to follow him as he commanded.

Strange though it may seem, this strenuous gospel of a crucified Savior and a cross-bearing church is not a sad gospel. Herein is the strategy of Jesus' Beatitudes. Every one of them looks to the unchristian eye like a sad limitation of a stern and joyless life. Quite the contrary. The climax of the Beatitudes is the heroism of the Cross!² Jesus not only honored sacrificial service supremely among the Christian virtues. He also placed it highest in his scale of happiness. He counted no joy higher than that of the persecuted prophets. His superlative degree of blessedness was the joy of the martyr.

Yet he himself was no ascetic. He knew many of the wholesome joys of normal living. He enjoyed the beauty of earth and sky on a summer day. He well knew the joy of productive labor, the satisfactions of work well done. He knew the sacred joys of human fellowship and the intimate friendships of life. He could rejoice with them that rejoiced, as

² Matthew 5:10-12.

well as weep with them that wept. His appreciations were broad as well as high. Life was sweet to him, and its joys were many. But the joys of sacrificial service he had found to be in a class by themselves. Years later the writer of the letter to the Hebrews was able to say of him, "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." * Against this background, hear the echo of the Master's own words: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." †

The joy of the Cross is the joy of ministering. But there is a deeper joy and a profound authority in it. Every cross has something divine about it. Vicarious suffering is godlike. When a person voluntarily suffers pain or loss for the sake of others, it awakens something of awe and reverence in those who observe it. That this spiritual appreciation is so fundamentally human it requires little culture or education is shown by a story of Chinese life which Doctor Buttrick quotes. ‡

The story is strikingly entitled "A Living God," because its hero was actually worshiped as a god by his neighbors during his own lifetime! He gained this rare distinction by a noble act of sacrifice during an earthquake and its accompanying tidal wave. From his farm on a hill by the sea, he saw the ocean

* Hebrews 12:2.

† Matthew 5:12.

‡ G. A. Buttrick, in *Jesus Came Preaching*.

swiftly receding from his neighbors' flatlands, like some prodigious beast of prey crouching for the leap; and he knew the leap would be the tidal wave. Turning instantly he ran to his precious rice-ricks, set fire to his year's rice crop, and rang furiously the temple bell near by. His neighbors, seeing the beacon, thought his farm on fire and rushed to his help. In a moment, from the safety of the hillside, they saw the swirling waters of the tidal wave engulfing their own fields. They realized at once how their lives were saved, and what it had cost their neighbor. They bowed in awe before the spirit of vicarious sacrifice which paid the price to save others. They have been worshipping his spirit ever since.

If love is of God, the Cross is its chief authority. The Gospel is not merely the message of Christ, or a book about Christ; the Gospel is Christ himself. And the Cross is his method of conquest. As Middleton Murry writes:

"Jesus is more than a teacher of ultimate wisdom. . . . He was a teacher who died to save men who would not listen to his teaching. No other teacher has done that. And that sets him above and apart from all other teachers. To the wisdom of the perfect teacher, in him was added the love of the perfect brother. There have perhaps been others as wise as Jesus, but none has had his love. Therefore there have been none so wise. To be wise and to love—this is beyond all wisdom." *

* J. M. Murry, *Jesus, Man of Genius*, p. xii. Published by Harper and Brothers, and quoted by permission of Jonathan Cape, Ltd., London, present owners of copyright.

If religion is a way of life with spiritual power, herein is the power. We need not only the power of self-renewal through prayer, with its contact with the life-giving God. We need also the power of fellowship with this sacrificial spirit of Jesus, whence comes our motive power, our highest enthusiasms and loyalties. We identify his revolutionary ideals and principles, but they would be as cold as a lifeless code of ethics, apart from his beating heart, his passionate love for humanity that proved its regal authority on the Cross. There we feel his divine authority, his infinite sacrifice of suffering love which challenges the world's loyalty and validates his leadership of the world's ideals.

This book is a study of Jesus' own religion, but we have now discovered our need also of the religion *about* Jesus. Here is the nexus between them. His Cross must be understood, and the flood of divine light it throws upon his life and teachings. It not only illumines his ideals by illustrating the greatest of them. It also gives motive power to them and thus saves them from being a mere ethical code. "Philosophy can live in the dry light of reason," says Galloway, "but religion cannot thrive except in an atmosphere of feeling." Ideals must have motivation. There is potential feeling in them, but it is found only when they are actually put in practice. It is when one tries out the Golden Rule of kindness that he discovers the joy of living by this gold standard of good will. Kindly action does increase

the motive power; just as running an automobile keeps up the charge in the batteries. But the self-starter soon runs out of motive. We must have a deep fundamental loyalty to maintain motive power in Christ's ideals for our Christian living. Here enters the Cross, and the challenge to our love and loyalty. Jesus seemed to understand this when he said, with such regal faith in the future, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." ⁷

⁷ John 12:32.

XXX

JESUS' RELIGION AND AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

HERE comes the chance for the man who would heckle the church! The church is a rather easy mark; and many are the cynics who rejoice at the heckling. However, we have no desire to make cynics rejoice, and we take no delight in wholesale criticism of the church. Most of us feel too deeply in her debt for that. So we are not likely to incur this weary protest of the reviewer of a recent volume which gave the church rather indiscriminate censure: "The problems of mankind are sufficiently staggering and American Protestantism is only too well aware of its inadequacy to render it necessary to have to bear the burden of another such diatribe." Whatever the following chapter may prove to be, it will not be a diatribe. The chapter heading calls for a sympathetic critique of our current Christianity in the light of the religion of Jesus which we have been exploring.

We have found the religion of Jesus facing courageously a noble objective. It is the reign of God, the kingdom of good will. That knightly Christian, President Hutchins of Berea, suggests the fine chiv-

alry of it: "I believe that the kingdom of God is the cause which can actually bind all the tasks of life together into one life-long master-task, call out our highest enthusiasm from sunrise to sunset, bind us to all the friendly workmen of the world, and bind us to the friendly Power behind the world." ¹ This master-task is our Master's challenge to his church. It was his unfinished work. He left it to his followers with his ardent prayer expressing both his hope and faith: "Thy Kingdom come: thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Were he to hail us, nineteen hundred years after, his challenge would surely be, "How goes the Cause?" All men of good will have faith that the Cause will win. "Love never faileth." Good will will ultimately prevail, and the will of God be done. But the question of doubt is, Who shall lead in that final victory? Will it be the forces of organized religion, or the forces of organized good will outside the church? This is not a rhetorical question, nor an academic one. It is a necessary one.

Our study began with the historical contrast between institutional Christianity and the religion of Jesus. There has been a grievous cleavage between them, and even the church's best defenders admit that the cleavage still continues. It is but natural. To the extent that Christians in the church are selfish, instead of kind and sacrificial, that cleavage will continue. But the critics who claim that "the religion

¹ William J. Hutchins, from a personal letter.

of Jesus has not failed; it has simply never been tried," are indulging in a superficial epigram which is unfair to the church. The church has always been experimenting with Jesus' religion. His ideals have always been on trial. What the critics perhaps mean is, the trial of his principles has been too tentative, with too little faith in their absolute worth and ultimate victory. Has the religion of Jesus really been *thoroughly* tried? The church's failures have been due rather to her half-heartedness. Only in part have Christians incarnated the spirit of Jesus. Seldom has the church accepted fully his ideals and attitudes toward life. Only rarely has the church been as unselfish, as sacrificially devoted to humanity as her Master was. Hence a timid Christianity has hobbled and handicapped the religion of Jesus. It has lacked his revolutionary boldness in challenging the world's ideas. It has toned down his more radical teachings and compromised his adventurous ideals. Whenever this has been done, the church has lost both spiritual prestige and moral leadership. We must remember, there was no compromise at Calvary.

However, one cannot indict a whole nation, nor the entire Christian church of America. It is grossly unfair not to recognize the great gains that have been made the past half century by social religion in thousands of churches in this country. What if there were ministers, a century ago, who defended slavery and the liquor traffic? Those days are gone. There are fewer "chained prophets in Babylon" today.

There has been a distinct rise in the social conscience of the land in recent decades. We have witnessed an increased sensitiveness to human needs, and a better organized spirit of kindness to minister to them. There has been improvement even in the ideals of business. For all these gains we must largely credit the churches and their ministers and their demonstration of the religion of Jesus, imperfect though it has often been.

It would be wide of the mark, however, to claim that our American Christianity of today, in the average church, is the same as the religion of Jesus. Often the difference is chiefly in emphasis; but even that is very unfortunate, for it misrepresents Jesus to the world. This misrepresentation keeps many out of the church, just as it kept out Abraham Lincoln. In many a community the churches are giving the impression that the religion of Jesus stresses the necessity for orthodox beliefs, the acceptance of a verbally inspired Bible, strict sabbath observance and church attendance, prosperity as a sign of godliness, and aggressive nationalism as a part of religion. Yet we found none of these emphases in Jesus' religion.

Did Jesus say "*Believe* that thou lovest the Lord thy God and believe that thou lovest thy neighbor as thyself; for this is the law and the prophets?" When he stood in the Nazareth synagogue to explain his Gospel of the Kingdom, was it a creed he proclaimed? Rather, it was a challenging program of service; though, like all service, it grew out of a con-

viction. The fact is we have no proof that Jesus ever told anybody what he must believe, except "Believe in God. Believe also in me." ^a Our church creeds still bristle with formulas of belief, many of which are relics of old theological battles ever since John stood on the Isle of Patmos. But they have little to do with life. Some of the formulas may be about Jesus, but they are not the religion he lived and taught. At best, a belief is but a promise of religious living. Sometimes we fail to keep the promise. In the religion of Jesus, it is religious living, not promising, that counts.

Heresy trials and tests of orthodoxy have been disappearing the last generation. It should be perfectly clear that any church that substitutes beliefs, however orthodox, for Jesus' ideals of kindness, service and sacrifice, is a church of the scribes and Pharisees, not a church of the Good Samaritan. Of course it is important what you believe. Belief should affect conduct. But any creedal religion is a cheap substitute for the religion of Jesus with its exacting ideals. Creeds are valuable as testimony but not as tests. As a real test of religious living, any creed is futile. The veriest hypocrite can easily profess orthodoxy.

The author is a strong supporter of the movement for better worship. But he is quite aware that the test of worship is religious living, not the reverse. Punctiliousness in church attendance proves no more

^a John 14:1.

than it did when Jesus condemned those who "loved the chief seats in the synagogues," and "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte." We need better worship for better living, but we must never make the former a substitute for the latter. Many churches recently have wakened to the fact that they fail to make God real to their worshipers, in their bare and slovenly order of worship, so lacking in all the appeals to beauty and symbolism. Yet the church that becomes obsessed by the love of ritual is in danger of making it a substitute for the religion of Jesus. There is much truth in Professor Ward's stricture, "The present cult of ritualism is merely a way of escape toward spiritual impotence, as far as any ethical purpose for mankind is concerned." *

More than one prophet of righteousness, jealous for the religion of social justice, is boldly accusing the modern church of accepting bribes of tainted money for the erection of luxurious temples of great beauty, and the maintenance of services with expensive choirs to cater to their wealthy patrons; and *then keeping silent on social religion*. It is a ghastly charge. That there are such churches cannot be denied. But to call them typical of modern Christianity would be utterly unjust. The American church as a whole has not "sold out to capitalism" as some radicals would have us believe. Our churches as a rule are composed of middle-class people, one

* H. F. Ward, *Which Way Religion?* Published by The Macmillan Company, and quoted with their permission.

or two denominations perhaps excepted, not people of great wealth; and in recent years they have shown keen interest in the social ideals of Jesus which their national councils and conferences have quite generally formulated and adopted.

It must be admitted that the great masses who have long been pacified by the opiates and soporifics of a priestly cult, which sometimes is little short of apostasy to Jesus' Gospel of brotherhood, have of late been breaking away from the church. Norman Thomas warns us that unless we are more loyal to the religion of Jesus this defection from institutional religion will continue increasingly, and the cry will become ever louder: "Away with this organized hypocrisy which so long has made us endure our unnecessary miseries and has blessed the means of our destruction by lulling us with promises and threats of an unknown hereafter!" *

Mr. Thomas is strictly right. The church is at the crossroads. The world knows the church claims to be following the Galilean revolutionist. His teachings were strikingly at odds with the prevailing ideas of his time, but he boldly proclaimed them regardless of the danger involved. If our churches would hold the respect of their constituency and regain the moral leadership they have in some communities lost, they must reassert the fundamental principles of Jesus and live by them. He gave the world a new scale of values. Not even his church is yet wholly

* Norman Thomas, *opus cit.* Quoted by permission.

convinced by them. One of our ablest sociologists senses this very accurately:

"Christianity is a new set of pattern ideas, marking the dawn of a new type of culture, a culture with a *non-predatory morality* on a humanitarian basis. It is an effort to transcend predatory individual, class, tribal and national ethics, to replace these with a universalized, social, international, humanitarian ethics. It looks to the establishment of a social order in which the divine will should be realized—a kingdom of God, an order which should make of humanity one large family, with peace, justice, and goodwill among its members."⁵

Yet some socially reactionary churches have postponed this whole issue, the main issue of Jesus, to the next world. Churches that are doing this are traitors to their Lord. If they are emphasizing orthodoxy in belief, or beauty of architecture, symbolism and ritual, or the comforting safety of mysticism, to distract attention from the embarrassing substance of Jesus' revolutionary social religion they deserve all the contempt they are getting from their neighbors; and should take to heart what Jesus had to say to such as they in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew!

In the early pages of our study we found that Jesus, beyond all question, made *brotherhood* and the human values paramount in the practice of religion. Perfect emphasis on the first half of his law of love does not condone the neglect of the rest of

⁵ C. A. Ellwood, *Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 76. Published by The Macmillan Company and quoted with their permission.

it. This would be religious vivisection; Christianity could not long survive it.

It will not do for the church of the Galilean Carpenter to be outdone by atheistic Russian communists in humanizing industry. The strange Soviet experiment, which many of us prophesied would not last a year, has actually survived fifteen years and is still going strong, in spite of its bad economics and its neglect of religion. Every additional year of Soviet success opens the eyes of the labor world still wider, and makes workers in other lands more restive under the profit system of industry which gives them no voice at all in management. There is a rising demand throughout the world for business to put the human element in industry above dividends. Unless the church stands by this principle of Jesus, the world will soon cease standing by the church. But again let us remind you, we are not pleading simply for justice to labor, as communism does, but for all four partners in industry. (See page 268.)

It is the most strategic time in the Christian era for an enlightened and progressive church to proclaim Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom. Never was there greater world unrest. Everywhere the sense of social security has been rudely upset. The foundations of our conservatism have been alarmingly shaken. Sudden reversals of fortune have brought about such upheavals we are all wondering what is impending. Of course it is worst in Europe; but nothing is more certain than that we are bound to

share still more in Europe's punishment for her economic follies and military sins. The world is now one neighborhood. It was highly alarming when Mr. Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, wrote last September to the Governor of the Bank of France that, unless something drastic were done soon, our capitalistic civilization would not last a year. And he specifically asked his French correspondent to keep his letter on file "for future reference!" *

Already there has been a turning to the churches, in this time of great insecurity and fear, for some reassuring message. An evasive message of complacent otherworldliness and pious mysticism will not do. Even if we could content ourselves with that, we could no longer content the multitude. If Christianity fails them now, they will turn to socialism or communism and try to feed their souls on the husks of its economic heaven. But this need not happen; and it will not, if the churches awaken to their opportunity and determine that it shall not.

In the religion of Jesus the Carpenter we have spiritual dynamic and guidance for the rebuilding of our badly shaken world. Of course it is not simply a message for preaching. It is a Gospel which must be demonstrated by both pulpit and pew. As soon as the miracle of the Cross in the lives of a million Christians transforms us from selfish profiteers to

* See John Haynes Holmes, "Prophets of Doom: Are They Right or Wrong?" Reprint of sermon at the Community Church, New York.

sacrificial sharers, anxious to prove the leadership of Jesus by allegiance to his service-motive principle, then the world will respect our religion as a religion of living power. If more and more Christians like Hapgood of Indianapolis succeed in humanizing their business and re-personalizing it, and thus develop a practical mutualism which wins the gratitude and superb coöperation of their wage-earners, the defection toward communism will surely be halted.

If more and more Christians discover with Jesus that gold is the chief hindrance to character, and the pursuit of wealth is spiritually dangerous, and it is folly to trust in gold for happiness, a new spirit of calm will come over our hectic age that has been listening too long at "the ticker." If more and more Christians come to believe thoroughly with Jesus that wealth should not be hoarded but used constructively to serve society; that there is really no absolute ownership for Christians, but that wealth is responsibility, not special privilege, they will no longer be content with generous almsgiving and go on living as pampered aristocrats. They will discover the greater joys of the brotherhood of Jesus, which sees through all the barriers of race and class and finds the face and the hand of a brother.

It is this for which our world is starving, not alms but a friend, not gold but a brother. Of all the world's religions, the simple religion of the Nazarene, Jesus' religion of friendship and service, motivated by the power of the Cross, has the utmost to

give what our age needs. Has our contemporary Christianity in America the necessary consecration to its Master, and the holy daring to be as revolutionary as he was, to make this demonstration of what religion meant to Jesus?

Barely four years ago Kirby Page wrote his brilliantly provocative book, *Jesus or Christianity*. With unscathing survey of Christian history he showed the sharp contrasts between the Christ of Galilee and the church through the centuries. Then he vigorously arraigned our contemporary Christianity on five heavy counts. He charged that modern Christians are involved in these five social evils, The War System, Capital Punishment, Racial Discrimination and Lynching, Economic Injustice and Strife, and Ecclesiasticism and Denominationalism. He brought fifty-two pages of incriminating evidence to support his charges. It was very convincing, though much of it could not fairly be laid at the door of the church, but American life in general. However, he was justified in censuring a strong, dominant church system, influential with at least half our population, for rather passively allowing these anti-social relics of the past to continue.

Since the above-mentioned criticism was written, four momentous years have passed. They have been years of frenzied speculation, sudden crisis of retribution, the collapse of prosperity, then depression and unemployment. We have been learning bitter lessons from the folly of experience. But on the vital issue

we are discussing we may discover a significant note of fine optimism which gives promise of a better day. Mr. Page's charges against the church of only four years ago are *strikingly less true today*. In this brief interim every year that has passed has seen the leading churches of the land take a more courageous stand for the social religion of Jesus. On the issue of militarism, after vigorously supporting the outlawry of war, finally resulting in the Pact of Paris, the churches have joined forces, with astonishing speed and no uncertain voice, against the whole war system. As reported in our Chapter XXVII, nearly all of the strong denominations and many groups of ministers have adopted aggressive resolutions protesting against war and preparedness; demanding progressive disarmament, and substantial reductions in our federal appropriations for army and navy; also protesting against the R. O. T. C. system of militaristic propaganda in schools and colleges. If the militarists try again to force this country into war they will find the church forces strongly against them.

We also noted in Chapter XXV that many of the great churches of the land have officially gone on record against the economic injustice in industry with its resulting social evils, which Mr. Page condemned. They have been just as frank and outspoken in condemning the evils of capitalism as of militarism; in fact often linking them together as the one great source of the world's present deplorable condition.

Our leaders have also committed the churches emphatically in favor of curbing the evils of sectarianism and racial discrimination. To a diminishing extent these and other social evils still remain to stain the current record of the life of our republic, but this fact at least should be made clear: They can no longer be laid at the door of American Christianity, so far as the churches themselves are concerned. Though late in the day, most of our churches have recognized the unescapable challenge which these evils of war and social injustice bring to the church of Jesus Christ, and have acknowledged fully their responsibility to proclaim his Gospel of the Kingdom. The social religion of Jesus, the revolutionist of Galilee, is no longer heresy in our churches. It is officially orthodox. The heretics now are they who oppose it!

In view of these encouraging facts of very recent history, therefore, the task of religion is to bring the church membership up to the advance line of their own progressive leadership. Naturally the solemn passing of resolutions and adoption of official "Social Creeds of the Churches" has not suddenly transformed, overnight, churches that have long been most interested in intellectual preaching, or æsthetic music, soothing ritual and mysticism, or orthodoxy in beliefs, into *churches of the Nazarene passion for brotherhood*. The task is for every local church to study the challenge for itself, and let the social faith of Jesus lead the way to a more brotherly

community. The task is for every minister to face the challenge to his courage which Jesus' own example gives; and then in kindly spirit bring to his conservative people the splendid Galilean vision of the kingdom of God's good will. To be sure, against the slow-yielding prejudices of selfishness and special privilege, the full message of Jesus is as revolutionary as ever. But it is his religion; we dare not longer shirk it. The world waits for the Gospel of the Kingdom.

"Hail, spirit of revolt! Thou spirit of life,
Child of eternal Love—
Love, rebelling against lovelessness—life rebelling against death;

Rise at last to the full measure of thy birthright,
Spurn the puny weapons of hate and oppression.
Fix rather thy calm, burning, protesting eyes on all the
myriad shams of man, and they will fade away in the
thinnest air.

Gaze upon thy gainsayers until they see and feel the truth
and love that begat and bore thee.

Thus and thus only give form and body to noblest aspirations.

And we shall then see done on earth, as it is in heaven,
God's everliving, growing, ripening will." ⁷

⁷ By Ernest Crosby, "Revolt," in *Plain Talk in Psalm and Parable*, p. 64. Published by Small, Maynard & Co. and used by permission.

XXXI

CREATIVE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

THE net result of the life adventure of Jesus of Nazareth who can estimate? The Christian believes it will ultimately be a redeemed world as well as redeemed souls. Jesus certainly gave humanity an incomparable spiritual and moral stimulus, and the abundant life resulting has been transforming the character and social behavior of the race ever since.

We do not believe this transformation has come merely by the process of human imitation of a noble example. It was more profound than that. It was nothing superficial. It has been actual reincarnation of the Master's spirit. True Christians are Christ-men, living again his undying, vivifying Spirit, which was the Holy Spirit of God. "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." ¹ Paul's other phrase suggests the corollary: "Christ in us the hope of glory." ² The mystic is content with this conviction of what is happening in his experience; and falls back on his Gospel of John for final authority. But others with more analytic urge are pushing inquiry further. We believe the influence of Jesus in the

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:19.

² Colossians 1:27.

modern world is essentially *creative*, rather than purely imitative, as this brief concluding chapter will endeavor to explain.

Our extreme modernist writers complain because we have no photograph of Jesus taken with modern anastigmatic lenses! Yet the New Testament does give us a series of portraits of him. To be sure they are time-scarred and weather-worn portraits. They needed reconstruction by artist scholars. However, through the loving toil of many generations, this painstaking work has been thoroughly done. Now shall we discard the portraits because they are not photographs? Not until a Bachrach sells higher than a Raphael or a Rembrandt; and it never will. The Bachrach is a reflection. The Rembrandt is an interpretation, a symbol with discerning power. A photograph is a purely superficial, exterior view. A portrait lets us look within.

But all the portraits, the interpretations of Jesus that we find in the New Testament agree in this, that the secret of his whole career was his intimate and immediate relationship with God. He was by no means a mere mystic, for he had an intense practical interest in all ranges of human living. He was a sane and practical mystic. He had a marvelous faculty for exploring the will of God. Hence his knowledge of truth seems intuitive. His many inspirations of truth and duty, which enabled him to speak with such authority, came from his communion with his Father. He revealed to his friends this inner secret

of his life when he said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." * He had very definitely the prophet's sense of "Thus saith the Lord" because of the felt presence of God in his life, so near he could say with inner conviction, "I and the Father are one."

Therefore one is in danger of distorting the whole emphasis of the social religion of Jesus until he discovers that every bit of it goes back to Jesus' own spiritual life. It is all an outgrowth of his constant contact with God. It was because he knew God so well, and felt so sure he had learned his will and what he wanted and expected of men, that Jesus was so emphatic on these few fundamental principles we derived from his experience. It should be noted that although he was a great lover of his fellow men, a great humanitarian, Jesus was distinctly not a humanist. His life and his interests were not man-centered but God-centered. He loved men because he knew God loved them, and because his fellow men were God's children. He revered personality because he found it to be the essence of God, in whose invisible image were all men created. Hence his great social principle of the infinite preciousness of a single human soul, out of which grew his entire social thinking and all his social ideals.

Granted then that the teachings of Christ do not furnish us a stereotyped set of social solutions, to be slavishly applied to twentieth-century living, just

* John 4:34.

how does he help us? His ethical insight, in its real uniqueness, is revealed in his avoiding the blunder of setting up a system of rules to bind the future behavior of his followers. All other great religious founders and prophets of social righteousness yielded to this natural temptation. And thus they limited their usefulness by the too-definite time-stamp, which localized their teachings in time and space. Jesus gave us no New Testament book of Leviticus. For instance, he condemned the system of personal, domestic divorce by husbands as thoroughly unjust. According to Mark and Luke he declared it never right. But he suggested no rules whatever to be followed in the judicial procedure of a divorce *court*, organized in the interest of social justice. He merely gave us an exalted ideal of human marriage as worthy of permanence, so noble an ideal that it remains still the anchorage of ninety-eight per cent of Christian marriages, even in America, enabling them to outride all domestic storms.*

He was the world's supreme spiritual genius, not merely in mystical thinking, like Gautama Buddha, nor simply in practical ethical insight, like Confucius; but in combining the values of both, with compensations which avoided the relative moral fruitlessness of the one and the spiritual destitution of the other. He lived a life sanely mystical but always bearing fruit in unselfish human relations of the most win-

* See the author's own data on this point, in G. W. Fiske, *The Christian Family*, p. 33.

some sort. Therefore we would say to the recent modernistic critics who challenge our right to continue using the popular phrase, "the Jesus Way of Living," *There is still a Jesus Way*. It may not be a blazed trail with every turn in the road slavishly routed; but it is *the integration of a brotherly life by filial love of God*. The routing then will take care of itself.

"He who walks in love may wander far;
But God will bring him where the blessed are."

The Master gives picture after picture of the glory of humble service, the nobility of sacrifice, the high strategy of kindness, and the ultimate omnipotence of love. He thus illustrates how these fundamentals of spiritual living worked out in his own day. Then he gave the world his summarizing Law of Love and his Golden Rule; which is really not a rule at all, but a general principle of life, an all-inclusive challenge to idealism and the heart of all altruism. Most important of all he revealed how his experience of God enabled him to live a thoroughly religious life in all his human relations. Thus he set for all time a spiritual norm for social-religious living. This is why we make the supreme objective for Christian education: "To share with teachable persons the religious experience of Jesus Christ, Christianity's unique possession." *

* See chapter by G. W. Fiske, on "Aims and Motivation of Religious Education," in *Studies in Religious Education*, edited by P. H. Lotz. Published by the Cokesbury Press, copyright, 1931, and quoted with their permission.

If we can only pass on, by our process of Christian education, Jesus' experience of God's presence and power, and his inviolate brotherliness and kindness, we shall transmit to our youth the creative capacity for fresh, first-hand religious experience today, and for clearer appreciation of the issues involved in our current life problems. This will carry with it Jesus' spirit and method of conquering love and sacrificial kindness, that is, the strategy of the Cross, which ultimately conquers enemies and wins sympathetic understanding. Thus we see how thoroughly spiritual the whole social Gospel of Jesus really is. It is all rooted and grounded in mysticism, in Jesus' experience of God. Dean Bosworth puts it most appealingly: "Jesus is today the supreme leader and redeemer of men in the sphere of their higher life because he had the supreme religious experience. He redeems men from the power of the evil will, by leading them into such a share of his own experience as they are able with the help of his immortal Spirit to achieve." *

Here then we find the clue to the practical meaning for our purpose in that pregnant word *Creative*, in our chapter title. Modern progressive Christian experience is not slavishly imitative. It is creative, because, like Jesus, it uses the Bible for light and spiritual dynamic, as urge but not chains, for the will. Thus it stimulates, not stunts, personality, original-

* E. I. Bosworth, *opus cit.*, p. 307. The Macmillan Company, publisher. Quoted with their permission.

ity, and initiative. It develops the more abundant life in the Christian, because it is his own life, not a weak imitation, an abridged edition, of some one else's. As my colleague, Professor Clarence T. Craig, says in a recent volume, "*The way of Jesus consists in bringing to the highest insight of the past, devout criticism and fertile thinking.*" The fuller will of God is yet to be discovered, and Jesus would trust the open mind to find it. The legacy of Jesus did not include a detailed map of the kingdom of God. Following him is following the spirit of truth in this adventurous pursuit of the good life." ⁷ How modern was the insight of old Pastor John Robinson, when he preached that farewell sermon to the Pilgrim Fathers at Delftshaven! The burden of his message was "God hath still more light to break forth out of his holy Word."

This is supremely true of the teachings of Jesus. We have found them challenging in their originality of insight and emphasis. They shock us at first sight, by their revolutionary accent. They compel us to study the way Jesus' own experience brought him to such radical convictions. They leave us with just a residuum of fundamental truth, deep below the superficial levels of conduct. But shortly we find that these basic principles of brotherly living must be the foundation for any social order which can possibly last. The wise master-builder, the Carpenter of Nazareth,

⁷ C. T. Craig, *Jesus in Our Teaching*, p. 130. Published by the Abingdon Press and quoted with their permission.

hath laid the foundation, and many have builded thereon. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus." *

Yet the builders of human civilizations, cultures, laws, and social customs, have repeatedly scorned this humble foundation of lovingkindness as too weak. So they built their proud temples of Mammon and towers of Babel upon the delusive sands, the quicksands of pride and hate, of avarice and militarism. And now their vast topheavy structures are toppling and threaten to fall. Yet the stone which the builders rejected has been made the head of the corner. They set him at naught and his Gospel of Peace. But in these later days all else has proved futile. All other foundations crumble. Again men are asking the Christ of the centuries, "Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Yes, it is still "Jesus or nobody."

* 1 Corinthians 3:11.

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